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A class act?

BY GARY COX

I will stand quietly at 10 a.m. June 5, among old friends and new, to witness the unveiling of the repaired Ludlow Monument, a universal symbol of the war between the classes.



One of the decapitated statues.

You may remember that two years ago I wrote in this paper about the "beheading of our twin towers" in May 2003. The United Mine Workers of America, with the financial help of many of you, has had the figures restored. This wonderful monument has stood silently at the eastern base of Colorado's Rocky Mountains, just 30 miles north of New Mexico, since Memorial Day, 1918. The UMW had it created to honor the miners, the wives and the children who fought and died on this spot against the quintessential symbol of the ruling class, John D. Rockefeller, on that cold fateful day, April 20, 1914. It may stand silently, but it speaks loudly — no, it screams loudly to all who will listen, as loudly as the monument at Waldheim Cemetery in Chicago, a warning that the rich take this struggle to dominate us and force us into slavery very seriously.

This year my mind will begin to wander and my eyes will begin to fill as the same tired rhetoric gets repeated. I have been to Ludlow so many times I know the usual words by heart. Not again, goddamn it.

Mary Mother Jones, you walked on this ground in 1914. You knew these miners and their families. You also knew that the "middle class" existed only at the whim of those who rule us. Why do you stand here quietly and listen to these whining speeches? "Oh, the middle class is shrinking as the unions get weaker."

You knew that the earth would become one big Wal-Mart if we workers did not organize as one class and fight back. Scream like you did at the union meeting in Trinidad in 1913, "If the choice is between slavery and strike, I say strike until every last one of you drop into your graves." And they did strike and many did drop into their graves.

The UMW was one of the first to understand and practice industrial unionism.

Mother Jones, nine years prior to Rockefeller's vicious attack on the Ludlow colony and exactly one hundred Junes ago, at 10:00 a.m. on June 27, 1905, you watched, as a delegate, as "Big Bill" Haywood brought 200 delegates to order at Brand's Hall in Chicago, using a piece of a board as a gavel. At 75 years of age, you listened as Haywood announced the birth of the Industrial Workers of the World, and declared class war on the ruling class; the Rockefellers and their ilk.

Among these 200 delegates were men and women of great vision. "Big Bill," fresh from the wars being fought by the Western Federation of Miners in

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May Day and Argentine workers' struggle

BY MARIE TRIGONA,
GRUPO ALAVIO, BUENOS AIRES

Since the turn of the century Argentine labor movements have marked May Day as a remembrance of class struggle and resistance. Since the 1890s, anarchists gathered in Plaza Lorea to commemorate the Haymarket Martyrs of Chicago who were murdered for their ideas and fight for a eight hour day. This year, workers in struggle held May Day in this same plaza, separate from the left parties.

"Fighting for a 6-hour work day is similar to the struggle for the 8-hour work day," said subway delegate Roberto Pianelli. "Today, the working class doesn't have time for rest, leisure activities, or for their lives. The economic system has transformed us into working beasts. The average working day for Argentines is 10 hours. This has resulted in a unified struggle among active workers and unemployed, fighting together against capitalism and super-exploitation."

Subway workers who have been organizing wildcat strikes for salary increases have spearheaded Argentina's movement for a six-hour work day. In 2003, subway workers (in all sectors from ticket office to train drivers) won a six-hour day. Metrovias, the private corporation contracted to take over the once state-run subway lines in Buenos Aires, has had to respect the 6-hour work day, improve working conditions and salaries, and address gender inequality. Since this victory, subway workers, other workers, economists and unemployed organizations have formed a movement for a 6-hour work day for all, with increased salaries. In addition, Metrovias employees (organized outside of the official UTA transport workers' union) held week-long wildcat strikes in February and won a 44 percent wage hike.

In interviews, several subway delegates reflected on the relationship between the struggle for a six-hour work day and the fight of the Haymarket Martyrs of Chicago, the personal significance of May Day and anarchist traditions in Argentina. I caught a few delegates after their weekly delegate meeting at Hotel Bauen, a hotel recuperated by its workers. Each line has two delegates. There are commissions for press work and gender. There are over 3,000 workers at Metrovias, who work three shifts, making it almost impossible to hold general assemblies except during strikes. In general, decisions are made during assemblies organized by line or shifts. The workers hold democratic decision making inside the delegates union as a fundamental principle.

Walter Varela, delegate from the subway's D line idealized the struggle for an 8-hour work day. "The Martyrs of Chicago set an example of struggle... What we want to do is to create a movement for a 6-hour work day. It would be useful for Argentina because it would create 4 million new jobs and better salaries for all workers, but our struggle doesn't compare to the struggle of the martyrs of Chicago," said Varela.

He added, "I couldn't tell you if there are workers more exploited than at the beginning of the century. In that period, work days were really long, just as they are today. If we look at the parallels between the struggle of the anarchists and today, we see that the labor standards have become more flexible. Today, workers are standing up against the trade unions and are creating a syndicalist movement made up of struggling workers. I see May Day as a day to recover the historical fight of workers and to continue with that fight. The struggle of the workers in Chicago, which ended with a terrible murder of eight workers who wanted to put in place an idea is celebrated on May Day, but it isn't a party. This is the difference we want to make."

Today unemployment stands at 19.5% and underemployment 15.7%, which means

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The true cost of coal

BY GEOFFREY FROST

Several Wobblies in Pittsburgh and in Appalachia are working to support Mountain Justice Summer. Mountain Justice Summer is a campaign to stop Mountaintop Removal (MTR) mining, an environmentally devastating mining practice.

Mountaintop removal is what it sounds like: coal companies blast off the tops of mountains to get at thin seams of coal that are hauled off to fire the power plants. MTR is how the power companies provide "cheap" energy to the rest of the United States. Of course, it doesn't really come cheap. Mountaintop removal is the neoliberal vision fulfilled: a handful of poorly paid, non-union workers destroying one of the most biodiverse regions on Earth to fuel power plants that spew out yet more pollution upon the usually poor working-class communities around them, all the while stoking the furnace of global warming that causes the deaths of thousands upon thousands of working people each year and is only growing worse.

This is the cheap energy that dooms our children to asthma, mercury poisoning, and perhaps no future at all. This is the "cheap" energy demanded by our government's financiers to fuel their uninhibited accumulation of wealth at the expense of all else.

Organizers with Mountain Justice Summer have already begun organizing against this outrage. They are building a coalition with community organizations throughout Appalachia to confront MTR in the coalfields and in the boardrooms. Their vision is to rekindle the spirit of Mississippi Freedom Summer and Redwood Summer, the solidarity amongst diverse people needed to shine the spotlight on an ugly problem hidden from the eyes of the world. The IWW made a major contribution to Redwood Summer in 1990 through its representation of lumber workers and focus on workers' safety in strengthening the environmentalist movement, and its presence is needed once again in this movement.

Why should workers be interested in this campaign? Because the same boss driven to destroy the earth is the boss hell-bent on beating down the workers. This is the same boss who talks about "union-free" workplaces, who ships in workers from out-of-state so they don't know whose town they're blowing up, then ships them out again once the work is done. When they're done in Appalachia, they'll be looking elsewhere to quickly extract more coal, perhaps in a town near you.

Central and Western Pennsylvania Wobblies have been having problems in their own communities with strip mining and mine collapses. Many workers are unorganized, or "misorganized" through contracts that focus on a mine by mine, or company by company basis, instead of organizing all

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Take Back Your Time day

I know Take Back Your Time Day is not until October 24, but I wanted to put the idea out there that the issue of shorter hours/days/work weeks is important.

Two years ago the *IW* ran a supplement for TBYT Day, and our Branch took part in distributing them. People were very receptive, and I think this is an issue which needs to be put out there more.

I hope you will have such a supplement this year (and every year) focussing not just on overtime, but on the whole issue of overwork. I think it's relevant and will promote the One Big Union and *IW* respectively.

Mark Nevin, Lancaster

The second TBYT conference will meet at Seattle University August 4-7 (details at www.timeday.org) focusing on policy, personal and cultural approaches to reclaiming our time.



Sudan atrocities

Since we are being bombarded with images from the Sudan about the refugee crisis in Darfur province, perhaps *IW* readers should know a little about the history of the country.

The conflict between the peoples of Northern and Southern Sudan goes way back to before the coming of Christianity and Islam to the area. In fact, an ancient Egyptian papyrus mentions recurrent conflicts between the two regions. Yet, our capitalist media harps on the fact that North Sudan is Muslim and that many people in South Sudan belong to various Christian groups.

It is true that British and Egyptians forces were chased out of the Sudan in the late 19th century by a Muslim rebellion. It is also true that when the British came back and in 1898 took over most of the present Sudan, they tried to turn the country into a great wheat-growing colony. This failed.

Instead, at the urging of capitalists who controlled the British textile industry, the Sudan was turned into a cotton-growing colony. The Sudan sadly was not the only nation in Africa where people who had long hated each other were thrown together by capitalist greed. The Sudan has been nominally independent since 1956. Successive governments dominated by Northerners have waged war on the Southerners with weapons that came first from the U.S., then from the Soviets, and finally from the U.S. again.

Yes, the folks who are committing genocide were once U.S. allies.

Robert G. Rice II

p.s.: While past imperialism in the Sudan was based on control of the cotton fields, the present government wants to get control of the country's oil fields.

Midsummer Sunrise

Morning's heat rises,
back alley trash begins to steam
as twenty year immigrants, old peasants,
pull the mist to till cabbages and kohlrabi.

With broad brimmed straw they dodge
sun's worst rays and chatter –
a cacophonous symphony – here Vietnamese,
there French, Thai, Mandarin.

These gardens are old, worn from
sneaking through fences and crumbling
asphalt. Each day they shrink.
Each day cranes crush struggling

carrot tops to make way
for condos, the newest neighbor.
Today it is hot and flies
swarm cat corpses cut tabby flat.

Today it is hot and forklifts
bring new brick in bundles.
When cool weather comes, tires,
fresh gates, will turn under fall crops.

Colin Bossen



On May Day, some 20 Wobblies and friends gathered to celebrate the opening of the new Chicago GMB office. The office, located behind the New World Resource Center at 1300 N. Western Ave., serves as a meeting and storage space for the branch. Plans for regular office hours are in the works.

IWW Scottish Assembly lays plans for Wobbly resurgence

Scottish Wobblies met April 17 to discuss strengthening IWW activity in the region. Scottish IWW branches have engaged in solidarity pickets of Starbucks outlets, and organized a job branch in the Scottish Parliament which is now seeking formal recognition.

There was extensive discussion of the decline in union membership rates across the British Isles, and the need for new models of unionism based upon rank-and-file self-organisation. Delegates voted to participate in July 4 anti-G8 meetings in Edinburgh and to recommit to formally registering the IWW in order to gain access to labour protections and protect members against reprisals for union activity.

While membership has grown dramatically in the last few years, not enough members have stepped forward to become involved in the work of building and administering the union. Delegates discussed informational and agitation campaigns around labour rights, health and safety, and shorter hours. When membership is large enough, delegates resolved to form a separate Scottish Regional Organising Committee.

A resolution in solidarity with the Federation of Workers Councils and Unions and the Union of Unemployed in Iraq was also approved, "salut[ing] the courageous struggle of their fellow workers and send[ing] revolutionary industrial unionist greetings ... The workers' struggle is an international one and global organisation is required if the working class are to carry out our 'historic mission to do away with capitalism.'"

Rutgers centenary conference

A May 7 conference in Newark, N.J., drew 75 people to discuss the IWW centenary. In the opening plenary, Steve Golin noted that "sometimes you win more in losing an IWW strike than in winning another kind of strike." Other talks touched on the IWW and race, immigrant Wobblies, and the Paterson strike. A labor chorus sang IWW songs, and FW Jim Crutchfield spoke on current organizing.

Connolly commemoration

Fifty people attended a May 14 program in Albany, NY, commemorating the IWW centenary and founding IWW member James Connolly. The event was held at the Ancient Order of Hibernians hall.

Widget & the Widgettes opened with a set of traditional Irish music. Speakers included Greg Giorgio of the IWW and Peter Urban on Connolly's contribution to the international socialist movement.

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Wobs join May Day actions

Smiling faces were everywhere in the Bushwick neighborhood of Brooklyn, New York on May 1st as workers marched for higher wages and overtime pay on Knickerbocker Avenue. Even the police were smiling as they herded more than 300 marchers through the neighborhood to the raucous sound of chants and home-made drums.

The march was sponsored by Se Hace Camino Al Andar/Make the Road by Walking, a community organization that sponsors a workers' rights group, Trabajadores en Acción/Workers in Action. The workers' group is also supported by members of the IWW's New York City GMB, who turned out for the march with banners and puppets.

Knickerbocker Avenue is the main shopping thoroughfare in Bushwick, and its merchants are notorious for paying sub-minimum wages, mandatory overtime without overtime pay, and other abuses. A recent report documents wages as low as $3.10 per hour and sexual harassment of women workers. Employers have been quick to fire any worker who dares to complain about conditions. Lawsuits sponsored by Make the Road by Walking have won significant back-pay awards for individual workers, but have had little effect on general conditions.

RWDSU President Stewart Applebaum addressed marchers from the back of a truck, declaring that sub-minimum wages were not acceptable, and demanding that employers obey wage and hour laws. "Thirty years ago," he said, "50 percent of the businesses on Knickerbocker Avenue were union shops, and the RWDSU was a part of that." He did not say how the current shameful conditions had come about in the face of that union presence, but promised that the RWDSU would do everything in its power to see that Knickerbocker workers received "a union wage."

U.S. Congresswoman Nydia Velasquez also spoke, insisting that wage and hour laws be obeyed. She did not explain why the laws were not already being obeyed, or why the government was not enforcing them.

After the march, a contingent of workers from Make the Road by Walking joined Wobblies for a bus ride to Manhattan, where a rally sponsored by the Million Worker March was underway at Union Square. The police at Union Square were not smiling. When a member of MWM announced that a truck carrying workers from Make the Road had been stopped and ticketed, and charged that the incident was deliberate harassment, the police cut power to the rally's sound system.

It remains to be seen what Workers in Action can accomplish on Knickerbocker Ave. Clearly, lawsuits, boycotts and marches will not bring decent wages and working conditions to a work force made up mostly of undocumented immigrants.

Economic power is necessary, and the IWW has been working with the group for more than three years to encourage a union presence on the street. The RWDSU's sudden interest in the neighborhood brings more resources to the effort, but has also created new tensions within Make the Road by Walking, as members worry that their campaign may be taken out of their hands, and community solidarity may be replaced by bureaucratic control and legalistic strategies.

Santa Barbara, California

Wobblies and friends in Santa Barbara gathered for a May Day picnic in Oak Park. A good time was had by all. We grilled meat and veggie burgers, ate the wonderful sides and salads that people brought, and drank beer and soda. A few fellow workers even played croquet in an attempt to reclaim this game for the people.

The conversation was lively. We sold a few calendars and handed out some *IWs*. As the afternoon waned, Luis Prat broke out his guitar and played several tunes including his song, "The Right to be Lazy." After years with no event marking May Day in Santa Barbara, we honored it in style. Many of us would like to make this a yearly event.

Florida Panhandle May Day

BY SCOTT SATTERWHITE

For the first time in a long time, local activists in Pensacola held major demonstrations on May Day, the international labor holiday. The story told most often is what happened at the rally, how many people were arrested, and who got beat up by the cops. While that is important, the story least told is how the event came to happen.

Pensacola is a small town in the Florida Panhandle with a generally conservative political slant. More like Alabama than Miami, as the local saying goes. However, there has almost always been resistance, from the days of the first invaders, to the abolition movement, anti-war movements, civil rights, gay rights, the fight for reproductive freedom, etc. Pensacola was even the site of one of the largest industrial strikes in Florida history.

This is true all over, I'm sure; it's just that people rarely hear about this because "we" don't own the newspapers that write most small town history. Or American history, for that matter.

But there had not been a May Day demonstration in Pensacola for some time.

I would be remiss if I didn't remind readers that nearly a year ago, Pensacola was hit by one of the worst hurricanes in recent history. Almost a year after Hurricane Ivan, the area is still in recovery. Visitors still remark about how devastating the destruction looks nine months later.

While the storm showed no favoritism, indiscriminately destroying mansions and shotgun shacks, it wouldn't take much sense to know which would be repaired first. The "haves" are not only rebuilding their lives, but rebuilding the entire city with new condos, new houses and high rise apartments on the beach. The "have nots" are living in beat-up houses with tarps, trailers rented by FEMA, on their friends' couches, jail for some, and the streets for many.



More than 300 workers marched down Knickerbocker Avenue in Brooklyn on May Day.

The class war has been declared in Pensacola, and right now we aren't doing so hot. Those who can make a buck off the devastation are doing it. Working-class homeowners who can't afford to rebuild are selling their homes cheap to companies that will rebuild them and resell them for double the pre-hurricane worth.

People who had good jobs before the storm find that those jobs were blown away with the roofs of their employers. Unemployment insurance only lasts so long, and the "decent wages" (a relative term) they used to enjoy have dropped to minimum wage.

Cheap housing is gone, and temporary FEMA assistance has dried up. With nearly every aspect of Pensacolians' lives still defined in some way by the hurricane's aftermath, activists have had their work cut out for them.

Soon after a peace group announced that there would be a May Day anti-war demonstration in Pensacola an anonymous flier hit the streets. The flier read: "On May First, 1886, passionate and committed workers ... demanded transformation of the society that was killing and exploiting them.

"Around the world that struggle is continued and re-invented by small groups and mass organizations, non-violent activists, freedom fighters, socialists, communists, anarchists, people with eyes open to the pain of the world, ready to act and learn. ...

"The U.S. military is extracting and destroying the best parts of our lives for profit, leaving behind nuclear wastelands, graveyards, broken minds, broken hearts, and broken bodies, from Elgin to Iraq, ... from Harlem to Afghanistan.

"It will take more than government grants, blue tarps, and new roofs, houses, and condos for the rich to make this city whole. The elites must answer for the anger, pain and suffering they have caused, for all that they have stolen. Make them answer..."

In a matter of days, this flier was all over the city. Pensacola has an ordinance against fliers in public spaces, but like most similar ordinances it is selectively enforced. Anti-war fliers are torn down by the city, while yard sale and lost dog fliers are left alone.

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Preamble to the IWW Constitution

The working class and the employing class have nothing in common. There can be no peace so long as hunger and want are found among millions of working people and the few, who make up the employing class, have all the good things of life.

Between these two classes a struggle must go on until the workers of the world organize as a class, take possession of the means of production, abolish the wage system, and live in harmony with the earth.

We find that the centering of the management of industries into fewer and fewer hands makes the trade unions unable to cope with the ever-growing power of the employing class. The trade unions foster a state of affairs which allows one set of workers to be pitted against another set of workers in the same industry, thereby helping defeat one another in wage wars. Moreover, the trade unions aid the employing class to mislead the workers into the belief that the working class have interests in common with their employers.

These conditions can be changed and the interest of the working class upheld only by an organization formed in such a way that all its members in any one industry, or all industries if necessary, cease work whenever a strike or lockout is on in any department thereof, thus making an injury to one an injury to all.

Instead of the conservative motto, "A fair day's wage for a fair day's work," we must inscribe on our banner the revolutionary watchword, "Abolition of the wage system."

It is the historic mission of the working class to do away with capitalism. The army of production must be organized, not only for the everyday struggle with capitalists, but also to carry on production when capitalism shall have been overthrown. By organizing industrially we are forming the structure of the new society within the shell of the old.

Join the IWW Today

The IWW is a union for all workers, a union dedicated to organizing on the job, in our industries and in our communities both to win better conditions today and to build a world without bosses, a world in which production and distribution are organized by workers ourselves to meet the needs of the entire population, not merely a handful of exploiters.

We are the Industrial Workers of the World because we organize industrially – that is to say, we organize all workers on the job into one union, rather than dividing workers by trade, so that we can pool our strength to fight the bosses together.

Since the IWW was founded in 1905, we have recognized the need to build a truly international union movement in order to confront the global power of the bosses and in order to strengthen workers' ability to stand in solidarity with our fellow workers no matter what part of the globe they happen to live on.

We are a union open to all workers, whether or not the IWW happens to have representation rights in your workplace. We organize the worker, not the job, recognizing that unionism is not about government certification or employer recognition but about workers coming together to address our common concerns. Sometimes this means striking or signing a contract. Sometimes it means refusing to work with an unsafe machine or following the bosses' orders so literally that nothing gets done. Sometimes it means agitating around particular issues or grievances in a specific workplace, or across an industry.

Because the IWW is a democratic, member-run union, decisions about what issues to address and what tactics to pursue are made by the workers directly involved.

TO JOIN: Mail this form with a check or money order for initiation and your first month's dues to: IWW, Post Office Box 13476, Philadelphia, PA 19101.

Initiation is the same as one month's dues. Our dues are calculated according to your income. If your monthly income is under $1,000, dues are $6 a month. If your monthly income is between $1,000 - $2,000, dues are $12 a month. If your monthly income is over $2,000 a month, dues are $18 a month.

- ❑ I affirm that I am a worker, and that I am not an employer
- ❑ I agree to abide by the IWW constitution
- ❑ I will study its principles and make myself acquainted with its purposes.



Name: _____

Address: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

Occupation: _____

Phone: _____ E-mail: _____

Amount Enclosed: _____

Membership includes a subscription to the Industrial Worker.



Building global solidarity, one campaign at a time

BY ERIC LEE

Two of the recent campaigns we've run on the LabourStart web site are what one might consider success stories. And yet the results – so far – could not be more different.

One campaign – in support of workers in the Bahamas who lost their jobs – resulted in a big victory. The other, in support of imprisoned union leaders in Eritrea, has produced no concrete results; the union leaders are still in prison. And yet both campaigns have been successful. In some senses, the second one – even though the unionists are still in jail – may be even more of a success story than the first.

Let me explain what I mean.

In late February, we reported that an unscrupulous company had shut down the Royal Oasis Golf Resort and Casino in the Bahamas, leading to the loss of 1,200 jobs. The government allowed the employer to get away with paying nothing to the workers – no severance pay, no back pay and no accrued benefits. This a violation of the country's laws and it looked like the resort was going to get away with it. The families of the 1,200 workers were facing extreme hardship. Their union, the Bahamas Gaming & Allied Workers Union, asked for a world-wide online campaign to be launched to compel the employer to pay what it owed the workers.

Over the course of some twelve weeks, we ran a campaign which was (to be honest) not the most successful we'd ever run, in terms of the number of messages sent. Fewer than 1,000 messages were sent. But the pressure worked, and as union president Dennis Britton wrote to us, "The Government of the Bahamas finally made good on their promise to pay to the displaced workers their entitlements under the law. Hundreds of displaced workers converged on the auditorium of Christ the King Parish to receive their long awaited redundancy packages."

Britton was delighted at the help we were able to provide, and wrote: "I thank all of you for your untiring support of the Gaming Union and the Workers of the Royal Oasis. Without LabourStart and your support I do not think we would has succeeded."

That's a classic campaign victory, even if the workers did not receive exactly what they were looking for. It was a victory for them and a victory for the international labour movement which rallied around them.

But that's only one kind of success in online campaigning. There's another way of measuring success too.

In mid-May, we were informed by the International Union of Food, Agricultural, Hotel, Restaurant, Catering, Tobacco and Allied Workers' Associations (IUF) of some bad news coming from Eritrea. It turned out that three trade union leaders had been arrested.

Tewelde Ghebremedhin, chairperson of the IUF-affiliated Food, Beverages, Hotels, Tourism, Agriculture and Tobacco Workers Federation, and Minase Andezion, secretary of the textile and leather workers' federation, were arrested by security police on March 30. They had been held in a secret security prison in the country's capital, Asmara, for six weeks before the campaign was launched. Meanwhile, another union leader, Habtom Weldemicael, who heads the Coca-Cola Workers Union and is a member of the food and beverage workers' federation executive, was also jailed. Their arrests were part of a pattern of human rights violations by the Eritrean regime which had been condemned by Amnesty International and other groups.

This confronted us with a difficult challenge. To be honest, most unionists around the world know little or nothing about Eritrea. Until a moment ago, did you know that the country's capital was Asmara?

Our experience with this sort of thing was not good. Back in August 2002, we did a campaign in support of independent unions in Belarus. The country's dictator, Lukashenko, was about to destroy the last remnants of free trade unionism in the country and we needed to quickly mobilize international solidarity. It was a flop; only 383 messages were sent to Minsk. Free trade unionism was snuffed out in that European country with barely a whisper of protest from the rest of the world. I often tell that story as an example of what happens when you try to do a solidarity campaign around a country unionists tend to know little or nothing about.

What would happen with those Eritrean unionists? Would unionists in places like Australia, Canada and the U.S. rally to their defense? I didn't have high expectations.

And yet the immediate response was overwhelming. Within 14 hours, the first 1,000 messages had reached us. They were automatically passed on to two Eritrean government ministries which had identifiable email addresses. Later on we began forwarding messages to Eritrean embassies by fax, bombarding the embassies in Canberra, London, Oslo, Pretoria and Washington. I suddenly received a phone call from a man who would not identify himself, but said he was calling from Norway and that I was sending him too many faxes. I asked if he was calling from the Eritrean embassy there, and he said no – but insisted that I had sent him ten faxes and that I must stop at once. He then hung up the phone. I checked and saw that the number he phoned from was the Eritrean embassy in Oslo. Naturally, we sent the faxes to even more embassies.

The campaign was quickly picked up and spread by others. The Campaign for Labor Rights, based in Washington, sent it off to their list. The Stop Killer Coke campaign made it an urgent alert to their thousands of activists. And of course the IUF and its affiliate unions were working hard to send off as many messages as possible.

After a week or so, the Eritrean campaign was the largest ever waged by LabourStart. It broke the 4,500 mark and continued picking up more and more supporters.

And for many of those people, it was their first contact with a LabourStart campaign. They added themselves to LabourStart's mailing list, now growing at a rate of more than 1,000 new subscribers per week. By late May, that mailing list had shot up to 26,000 addresses, and was still growing quickly.

Meanwhile, the Eritrean union leaders continued to languish in prison.

The campaign is not yet over, of course, and will not end until Ghebremedhin, Andezion and Weldemicael are freed from jail, allowed to return home to their families and to resume their union work.

But even now, we can consider this campaign a success. I'll explain why.

By involving so many thousands of people in the campaign, in many cases for the first time, and getting so many of them onto our mailing list, we are expanding the campaigning capacity of the international trade union movement.

This means that the next time we have to do a campaign, we will be able to instantly involve much larger numbers of people than ever before.

That is at the core of what we are doing. We are building something utterly new in the union movement: the capacity to react rapidly to violations of workers rights anywhere in the world, and to deliver thousands of messages of protest and solidarity within hours.

We are not there yet. I look forward to the day when the arrest of a union activist anywhere in the world will trigger such a public outcry that governments and companies won't even dare to do it. And before that, I hope to see us able to deliver not 1,000 messages in the first day, but 10,000 messages. I want the public relations departments of corporations in New York and in London to feel what embassy officials in Oslo and Canberra are feeling right now. I want us to be able to do what Amnesty International has long been doing for those it defines as "prisoners of conscience." I want us to be able to do this for workers who have been cheated of their severance pay, or whose employers refuse to bargain with their union. I want to us to be able to do this for workers who have been jailed, but whose only crime was to try to organize a union.

The success of the Eritrea campaign is that it makes that day come sooner.

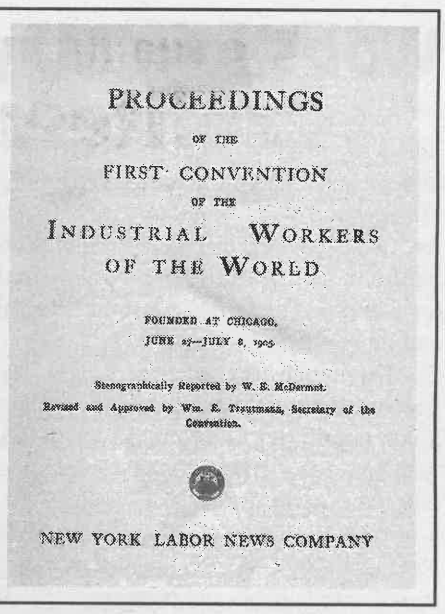
So when I look back at the victory in the Bahamas, I'm happy that we were able to help out. This is not the first time that our campaigns have worked when focused on hotels and other parts of the tourism industry. Those companies and governments hate bad publicity. They are more vulnerable, perhaps, to this kind of pressure than the dictators in Minsk and Asmara. And our victory in the Bahamas will encourage even more people to send off messages in support of Ghebremedhin, Andezion and Weldemicael. Every time we are able to announce a victory, people are eager to help bring on the next one. Each campaign, the big ones and the small ones, the ones that result in clear victories and the ones that drag on, each one reinforces the others, and the mailing list grows and grows.

These campaigns give me hope that the Internet is really proving to be the tool that I hoped it would become. Many people are excited about the net because it makes their shopping more convenient, or allows them to discover long-lost friends. That's nice. But for me, what really matters is that the Internet is allowing us to do what unions were designed for: to build international solidarity, and to unite workers across borders. And it's allowing us to do this one campaign at a time.

The IWW: 1905 - 2005

The cover of the Proceedings of the First **Convention** of the IWW held in Chicago, Illi**nois, June** 27 through July 8, 1905. An original **copy of the** proceedings is part of the Industrial **Workers of the** World collection at the Archives **of Labor and** Urban Affairs.

The IWW** collection at Wayne State Univer**sity comprises** 192 boxes of manuscript material **as well as** hundreds of photographs and artifacts. **Anyone** interested in the collection, or interested **in adding to** it, should contact William LeFevre **at the Archives** at 313-577-2789 or by email at **William.LeFevre@Wayne.Edu.


PROCEEDINGS
OF THE
FIRST CONVENTION
OF THE
INDUSTRIAL WORKERS
OF THE WORLD
FOUNDED AT CHICAGO,
JUNE 27—JULY 8, 1905
Stenographically Reported by W. E. McDermut.
Revised and Approved by Wm. E. Trautmann, Secretary of the Convention.
NEW YORK LABOR NEWS COMPANY

The cost of coal...

continued from page 1

the coal industry workers together. This method is failing – the unions are fighting a battle they can't win, and are being forced to accept bad contracts, unsafe conditions, and the destruction of their own communities in order to keep the jobs they have. When organizing on a mine by mine basis, mining companies threaten to close the mines and open up non-union somewhere else, running quick and dirty operations with the goal of mining the most coal at the fastest rate, and no concern for workers' safety or protection for the environment. As it stands, even the union miners are working themselves right out of a job.

The strength of the bosses is enormous, and the best chance we have of winning is through solidarity amongst all the people affected by the outrages of the companies: the miners, the coalfield communities, the environmentalists, and even the city folk who have to breathe the sooty air from the coal power plants. We hope to learn from what our fellow workers further south are doing to organize against mountain top removal mining, and bring those lessons back home.

Mountaintop removal is an absolute tragedy for Appalachia. It is destroying one of the most beautiful places on earth, and it is enslaving the workers. Quick and dirty strip jobs on the tops of the mountains of West Virginia means a few workers with tons of dynamite, a lot of big equipment, and a few drivers. Since the onset of MTR, coal mining jobs have dropped by 75% even as more coal comes out of the mountains. The more desperate folks get, the more the bosses push the false choice – jobs or the environment – upon us. And when their kids are starving, most folks will take the jobs over death.

But that's where the IWW is needed. Because choices like that are how the bosses of this world continue to divide us. They say to accept pay cuts here or the jobs go overseas. They say it's either work more or make less. They say we have to choose between health care or more pay, jobs or the environment. They talk a lot of lies to keep us making the choices that give them power over us.

The real choice is between workers' power and power for the boss. If workers had any power in the coalfields, we wouldn't choose to wreck the place where we live, we wouldn't choose to mine coal so fast we put ourselves out of work in a year or two, we wouldn't choose to give all our wealth to the company and be satisfied with the scraps. Maybe we wouldn't even choose to mine for coal at all. Maybe we'd choose to work less, or to develop sustainable alternatives that didn't expose us to coal dust, toxic sludge and heavy metals.

These are all distant hopes, for sure, but they represent the only hope that we have. Because as long as the bosses are in control, they make all the choices that continue their wealth and power at the expense of everything and everyone else. Our world, our future, our children's future, all are expendable in their great game of capitalism. But this is a chance to take them on, to strike at the heart of no-future capitalism and win a victory for working people – both directly for the lives of those in the coalfields of Appalachia and for the rest of the world being choked to death by our country's insatiable greed for energy. The odds are tremendous, and to win everyone must stand together in solidarity against King Coal. Environmentalists, residents and coal workers together is the only way our power can match theirs.

IWW members in Western PA are working with a local group, "Canaries in the Coalfields," to host a conference called the True Cost of Coal, to be held in Pittsburgh June 5, and a demonstration and speak-out at the "National Coal Show" industry convention Tuesday, June 7, where those affected by mining will come from across Appalachia to share their experiences.

In the spirit of Redwood Summer, we hope to see you in the coalfields. You can read more about Mountain Justice Summer at www.mountainjusticesummer.org

Blair Mountain to be leveled?

Historic preservationists and environmentalists are fighting to protect 14 miles of ridgeline surrounding Blair Mountain, where, on Aug. 30, 1921, thousands of union coal miners clashed with sheriff's deputies, state police and coal-company guards in the final battle of the West Virginia coal wars.

The UMW is supporting the coal companies in their bid to strip mine the mountain, if a small sliver is preserved as a monument.

The seamy underside of the corporate testing industry

Profiteering by educational fraud

BY WALT WEBER JR.

Part 1 of this two-part series ran in May.

Although much has been written about No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and its corruptness, not much has been said about NCLB and the testing industry. After working in the testing industry for almost two years, I have witnessed many different levels of corruption. The bottom line that everyone should know, however, is this: *test results do not and never will reflect what kids actually know.*

Many have argued that test results do not necessarily represent what a child actually knows about the material. While I agree, this is not what I mean. My point is that as a result of the law, states were given an ultimatum – show Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) or suffer cuts in funding.

The public reaction to this ultimatum was what is commonly called teaching to the test. Many different teaching programs were implemented to show parents and public officials that schools would work hard to make extra sure that kids got a good education.

The seamy underside of NCLB, however, is what happens between the school districts, the states, and the private testing contractors. This side of NCLB never sees the light of day, and it was the side that I was on.

This was a classic example of the principal of CYA – cover your ass. School officials, teachers and state bureaucrats do not want to see their schools lose funding or be admonished under their watch, as that would make them look very bad. So these people, who happen to be the same people who interact with the testing industry, set out to make sure that this fate would never befall them. The easiest way to do this: rig the tests so that it appears that the kids are improving.

This is done in several ways. The first step is the most common: grade the same testing materials that the kids took last year more leniently this year. To give you an example of how this is done, I will give you a real world example from my former job.

Each year, for a number of years, kids in the same grade are given the exact same test; same questions, same order, same everything. There is a mixed bag of questions which consist of multiple choice, open ended, reading for comprehension, and essay. I specialized in open ended math questions, which are most often graded on a 2 point holistic scale, with a range of 0, 1, or 2. A zero represents no understanding, a one partial understanding, and a two is a perfect score. Most of these types of questions ask the student to calculate something and show their work or explain their answer.

So, as an example of how the test would be rigged, let's say that on last year's test, question 32 had an average score of 1.1, showing that a majority of kids taking the test got a 1 on the question, showing that it is a hard question. Well, the next year, you would do two things: flag that type of question for further review in the school district, and also tell the testing company to grade question 32 a little more leniently next year. With teachers hammering home the points in that question more, the scores would improve, but the scores would also improve from the question being graded more leniently.

Usually this type of lenience comes from a meeting between the school district and the testing company, in which they say that they need to re-evaluate the question, which is industry code for grade it more leniently. The message is passed on to those who manage the test, and those who train the evaluators – turn up the juice on question 32. All of a sudden, common responses that were a zero last year become a one this year, and ones become twos. So regardless of whether more kids answer the question more accurately, the kids show improvement over last year's class, and wow they must really be learning a lot, and they are showing Adequate Yearly Progress.

There are other ways that the tests are rigged to show improvement that is not there. Every couple of years the grading strategy is rethought, and a series of meetings are held to help establish new standards. Certain questions are rotated out of the test, and new questions are rotated in. Often, in the first year new questions are graded very hard, in order to get a realistic sense of what the kids know. As time goes on, the belt is loosened a little more each year, until the results are totally meaningless. I sat on the meetings, and they were horrendous.

Before the meeting would take place, we would be given a packet of papers that we would discuss at the meeting, and a couple of days to put them in the order that we thought was correct, from best to worst. The job of the committee was to pick out the papers that would be clearest to use to teach others how to grade. This committee was made up of two people from the scoring division, one outside independent contractor who worked for another company, one person from the development team, two people from the department of education, and two actual teachers.

Out of all of these people, I and the other person from the company were the harshest graders. Any time there was a question of whether a person should get a 1 or a 2 on questions, 90% of the time they would say a 2. In talking to my coworkers, this was their general experience as well. In fact, an ongoing joke at my table by the teachers and the school board officials was that any time that we were very lenient, they would say, well that's our AYP and start laughing. So, it was totally understood that what they were doing was making the grading easier, so that the kids would appear to show improvement; they said so themselves.

The third way to rig the tests is even more insidious: dumb down the tests. I discovered this when a coworker pointed out that the 8th grade test that she was grading this year had the same exact questions on it as the 4th grade tests. Apparently, some of the kids would get lower grade content on higher grade tests, and have them supposedly graded more vigorously. Also, in some cases, these kids would see the same questions on the third, fourth, fifth grade tests; same question year after year. So, obviously, by making the test easier with easier content, the kids' scores will improve.

Finally, when all of this has been going on for too long, a whole new test is introduced. New questions are designed, sometimes easier than the ones before, and the test is beta tested and then moved into the regular test. When a new test is introduced, there is a benchmark year, which is not really compared to the previous year's results, because it is a mostly new test. This benchmark year allows the rigging process to start all over again, and AYP to be shown.



It was clear to me what the motivations behind NCLB were within the first six months of when I started to work for McGraw Hill. I think that it was designed by the Bush government with the idea that in order to cover their asses, a lot of school districts and entire states would begin the process of teaching to the test and rigging the test, therefore making the test scores appear to go up. No one wants to be the one who was in charge when certain schools, districts or even entire states are admonished by the federal government, so many of the bureaucrats and teachers involved worked hard to make sure that this would never happen.

Some of this work included teaching harder and better, and making sure that the kids understand the material on the test; however, much of it was also focused on how to manipulate the test scores, to make them appear better than they are. In reality, we will never know the answer, because the tests are no indication of what the kids are actually learning, and as long as the tests are run by private industry, they never will be.

In fact, in the testing industry, delivering favorable results to the customer (i.e. the school districts and states) is the goal, not accurate test scores. This was one of the first lessons that we learned when we first got trained at the company: put aside your personal biases, the customer is always right. This type of customer service attitude generates higher profits, not accurate test scores.

I know from my personal experience that if the tests were graded correctly and fairly, at least two of the states that I worked on for that company would never meet their AYP requirements. The progress is just a dog and pony show that is put on to please the administration, and keep the funding tap open.

Finally, mix into this a base of employees who are mostly doing this job until they can find a better one. They get no benefits, a mediocre pay check, have a huge turnover rate, and have zero job security. Because of low employee morale, everyone is much more pliable to the idea of manipulating the test results.

The short institutional memory caused by a high turnover rate means that most people who are there do not personally see the slipping of the standards and do not fully understand the process that is going on.

Those who do stay are promoted to semi-permanent middle management positions, and become afraid to speak out because it jeopardizes their job security. Thanks to the poor job market, many are forced to accept a reality that they would ordinarily never have a part of.

The largest tragedy here, however, is the use of elementary school children as pawns in a chess game that involves making a president look good, preserving education funding, and increasing the testing industry's profits.

As I left my job, McGraw Hill was preparing to double its facility in size again. They had just won contracts for two more states, and were expanding into another building at the site I had worked at – only one of their four scoring centers in the country. One is in a former shopping center, and takes up the entire strip mall. Every year since 2002 they have doubled this site's capacity and size as their power and profits continue to grow.

We must fight back against NCLB, and that the law itself must be overturned. Also, in order to improve working conditions in the industry and increase the validity of the testing results, all employees in the testing industry must organize. Only with a well organized, militant union will there be a force to push back against the company's agenda of low wages, low morale, irregular work, and lying about the children's futures.

Without a union on all of these job sites, there will never be a way to truly check the power of the politicians and the companies. The time to fight back is now.

Teaching Assistants fight for union protection

BY CHRIS MAISANO

A wave of labor unrest led by graduate student-workers seeking union recognition and fair contracts rocked college and university campuses in late April, disrupting business as usual at some of the most prestigious institutions of higher learning in the United States and challenging the increasing corporatization of the academy.

The highest-profile job actions took place at Yale and Columbia, where graduate teaching assistants' and research assistants' unions undertook the first coordinated, multi-campus strike in the history of the Ivy League April 18-23 to pressure their respective administrations to recognize their unions.

Strikers from both universities converged in a massive rally in New York City April 21, which attracted AFL-CIO President John Sweeney, UNITE HERE presidents John Wilhelm and Bruce Raynor, Rev. Jesse Jackson, and members of the New York City Council to the picket lines. However, for the most part members of other unions crossed picket lines during the strikes.

On the same day, unionized graduate employees at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst staged a one-day walkout to demand a fair contract, shutting down much of the college. Their union, Graduate Employees Organization – UAW Local 2322, which represents 2,500 student-workers on campus – had been in negotiations with the administration for over a year before reaching a settlement May 10.

The tentative agreement, reached shortly before a grade strike was to begin and which must be approved by the governor (who has refused to fund some other state workers' contracts), gives workers a 2 percent raise during each year of a three-year contract that runs through June 30, 2007, maintains health coverage and child care, and turns back the administration's demand to abolish health benefits for same sex couples.

However, while these actions drew attention to the plight of graduate student workers, officials at Yale and Columbia continue to refuse to recognize the unions.

Graduate employees at private institutions face an uphill battle against the National Labor Relations Board and their wealthy and powerful college administrations.

While public institutions are regulated by state governments, many of which have granted the right to organize and bargain collectively, the NLRB does not recognize these rights for graduate students at private colleges. In a 2004 case concerning Brown University, the Republican-controlled board ruled 3-2 that teaching and research assistants were primarily students and not workers, denying them the right to organize and bargain.

This ruling was a reversal of a 2000 decision involving New York University, in which the board ruled that the workload of graduate students qualified them as employees. TAs and RAs at NYU unionized and negotiated a contract in 2002.

Students at Brown, Columbia, Penn, and Tufts voted on whether to unionize, but those administrations appealed to the NLRB, which impounded the ballots. The NYU contract expires this fall, and the university will likely seize upon the NLRB ruling and refuse to recognize the union in the future.

Graduate student-workers also face intense opposition from their administrations. Recently, *The Nation* obtained an internal memo by Columbia University Provost Alan Brinkley that listed possible retaliatory actions to be used against union activists, including increased workloads and denial of summer stipends and certain scholarships.

Fired for honoring picket line

Nearly 140 adjunct faculty at the City Colleges of Chicago were not rehired for the spring term because they honored full-time faculty's picket lines last fall, even though the semester was extended by three weeks to make up the missed classes. Part- and full-time faculty are represented by separate unions, and their contracts require them to cross each others' picket lines. Faculty have voted no confidence in the administration.

May Day Argentina

continued from page 1

35.2% of workers (approximately 5.2 million) have serious job problems. Businesses take advantage of the desperation of the millions of unemployed – increasing work shifts, allowing work conditions to deteriorate, paying under the table, and lowering salaries to a humiliating subsistence. The average salary is 600 pesos (around $200) and the poverty line is 720 pesos. Inflation is increasing rapidly, it's expected that 2005 inflation will reach 20%. Wages have been frozen since the early '90s, not readjusted after the peso devaluation in 2001 which devalued salaries to a third of their former value.

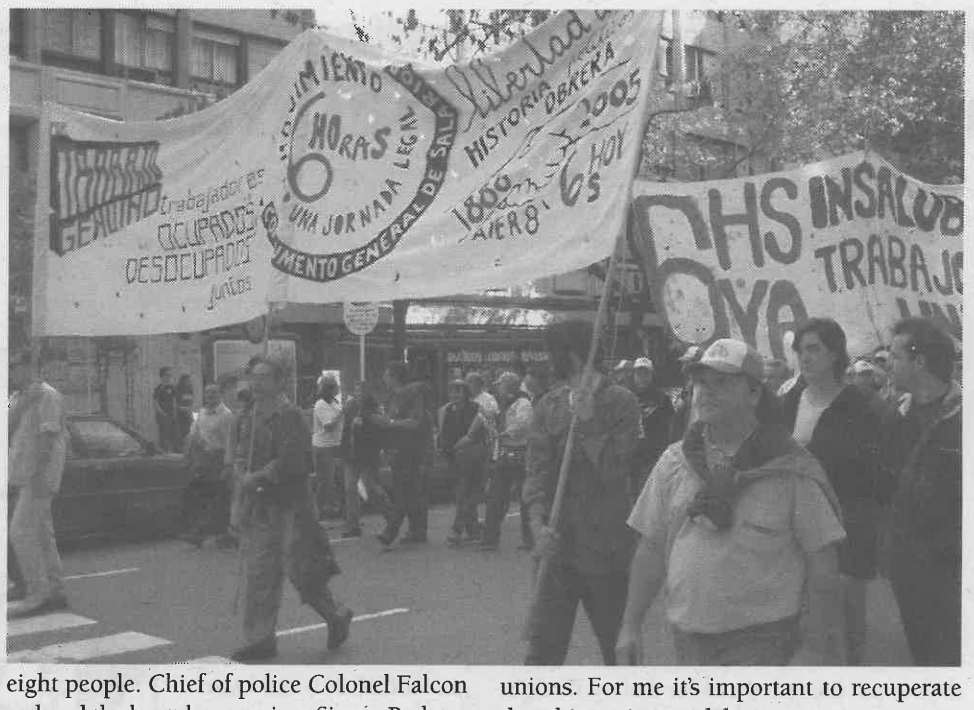
This has made the situation unbearable, and many sectors have held actions (strikes, occupying buildings and recuperating bankrupt businesses). May Day 2005 arrived in the midst of hospital workers, airline workers and teachers' labor conflicts. Many other slogans reminiscent of the Haymarket anarchists were heard during this year's May Day: freedom for all political prisoners and defense of worker-controlled and occupied enterprises.

Pianelli drew a direct connection: "In this past century, there haven't been relationships as strong as with the turn of the 20th century in respect to working conditions as there is today. The first nexus is the level of super-exploitation that workers are suffering. Today, workers work incredibly long shifts, with miserable wages and an army of reinforcement."

Jorge Mendez is a young worker. After the subway was privatized, Metrovias cut back personnel and hired mostly young workers. This year was the first time Mendez spoke on a platform, he said that this May Day was a moving experience. Not only because he spoke, but because workers could mark their own path without being blocked by the traditional left. Workers are proving they can set their own dynamic of struggle without Marxist/Trotskyist parties and electoral platforms. He said syndicalist methods of democratic organizing, workers funds and direct action methods such as the strike, sabotage and collectivization were an inspiration.

"Capitalism has evolved to always fix itself and to continue exploiting the workers. We are organizing so that our fight is similar to the struggles of the workers who died for an 8-hour work day. We want to recover May Day as a day of struggle. Today, when there is so much unemployment we are convinced that our struggle in the subways for a 6-hour work day can be a solution for the millions of unemployed in Argentina," said Mendez.

In 1909 the anarchists organized a May Day demonstration in Buenos Aires, in Plaza Lorea. Police attacked the rally and killed



eight people. Chief of police Colonel Falcon ordered the brutal repression. Simon Radowitzky, a 19-year-old immigrant from Russia, made history when he killed Colonel Falcon. He was present at the May Day demonstration and watched the death of his comrades. A week after the repression, Radowitzky threw a packaged bomb into the Falcon's carriage. He spent the next 21 years of his life in prison.

In April, subway workers staged a strike in solidarity with airline workers against the government's decision to sell the state-run airline LAFSA to LAN Chile. Police attacked a workers' assembly at Jorge Newberry metropolitan airport April 19, shooting tear gas and rubber bullets at workers. Twenty demonstrators were injured. Subway staff immediately announced they would stage surprise strikes in solidarity with LAFSA employees.

Subway workers have pledged to use strikes as a direct action against state repression of labor conflicts. In recent months, with a crackdown on worker-controlled ceramics factory Zanon, subway workers have promised that if the factory is evicted there will be a price to pay in Buenos Aires subway lines. During the May Day action this year many workers from different labor conflicts spoke of mutual solidarity and support as fundamental objectives of struggle.

Pianelli reflected on the importance of this year's demonstration. "This May Day was really important because in this year a ton of struggles and conflicts emerged. We staged a huge action, led by workers' organizations, without the participation of the traditional leftist political parties as part of a vanguard of workers in struggle. This is why we did an act in Plaza Lorea."

He added, "The working class has inherited slogans from anarchists at the beginning of the century such as struggle for political prisoners and organizing working class unions. For me it's important to recuperate the ethic, actions and democratic organization from the anarchists. The anarchists' actions at the beginning of the century to raise a working class subjectivity and to take in their own hands their destiny have been lost in the past decades of Argentine history. Many sectors of the left try to defame anyone (activists/workers) who acts differently from their electoral objectives, any who dissent (a practice from Stalinism). Workers need to recover the best traditions from anarchism – self determination, respect for dissidence and creating a new working class subjectivity."

Since the mid-1990s, with swelling unemployment, the road blockade became the central tactic of the piquetero movement. Without access to the factory and the ability to strike, sabotage machinery and occupy factories, unemployed workers sought out a new practice for struggle – the blockade, a method to prevent merchandise from arriving to the market. In the past few years, active workers gained ground in terms of accessing the work place to pressure owners and bosses for better wages and working conditions. The dynamic of workers' struggle has changed and strengthened in search of new victories.

Mendez summed up this new dynamic. "Today I think that it's us, the employed workers, who have to fight so all of the compañeros, who were excluded from the system, can be reinserted into the labor market with better conditions and salaries. We think that we have the possibility to unite all of the struggles."

A delegation from the worker-occupied Zanon factory will participate in the Chicago IWW Centenary conference. Grupo Alavío is a direct action and video collective that produced a documentary about the struggle for the 6-hour work day. www.alavio.org. Another new documentary, "The Take," explores the occupations.

Millions celebrate around the globe

Millions of workers all around the globe, from Mozambique to Manila, joined May Day rallies and marches demanding a living wage, the right to organize and immigrant rights, and in opposition to the U.S. war on Iraq.

In Germany, more than half a million workers rallied against layoffs and falling wages. In Bangladesh, thousands rallied to demand better safety standards weeks after a garment factory collapsed, killing 76 workers. In Nepal, thousands marched in the capital city Kathmandu, demanding an end to martial law.

In Japan, hundreds of thousands called for a global ban on nuclear weapons. In Russia, 20,000 unionists marched down one of Moscow's main boulevards, demanding a living wage. In Turkey, workers organized three different rallies in Istanbul, despite a government ban on May Day events.

Half a million marched in Mexico City. In Maputo, Mozambique, 30,000 marched behind a banner: "Mozambican workers in the struggle against HIV/AIDS." Marchers also demanded an increase in the minimum wage and back wages for factory workers, some of whom haven't been paid for months.

In New York City, labor, antiwar, community and immigrant rights activists called a May Day march and rally despite the city's initial refusal to issue a permit. The city backed down at the last moment, but police attacked the Union Square rally the minute the sound permit expired at 5:00 p.m.

IWW members joined a separate May Day march in the immigrant Brooklyn community of Bushwick (report p. 3).

May Day events took place across the U.S., as workers (many immigrants) continued the process of reclaiming labor's historic holiday. Indeed, May Day celebrations have grown to the extent that many politicians now try to horn in on the action, defiling speakers' platforms with their presence.

EuroMayday

Coordinated May Day actions across Europe called attention to the spread of "precarious" part-time and casual jobs. In London, where 30 percent of people of working age are in temp, casual, part-time, freelance work or unemployed, the Precarious Network held actions at a Tesco supermarket. Tesco, Britain's largest grocery chain, is in the forefront of exploitative work practices.

Police continued their recent pattern of brutal assaults on London May Day protests, holding down participation and disrupting the celebratory tone organisers tried to set with a samba band and dancing.

Pensacola May Day...

continued from page 3

Ten days before the rally, a young woman (and former Wobbly) was hassled by the police late at night for posting these fliers downtown. She was told she would be arrested if she didn't get in the police car, point out every May Day flier, and tear them down. She refused, stating that the officers had no right to arrest her for violation of city ordinance. They could ticket her but she could not be legally arrested. After an illegal search, the officers backed down and released the young woman without arrest or fine.

The next day, a note appeared at the cafe where the IWW meets (and several Wobblies work) asking for help in this "free speech fight." Soon other Wobblies took up the fight, posting the fliers in public spaces. The flier was translated by two Spanish-speaking members and posted throughout the county and in various spots downtown.

Another flier was made to ridicule the "post no bills" selective enforcement that read "LOST CAT (with the IWW's 'Sabot Kitty' pictured below), goes by the name 'MAY DAY'; if found please bring to ANTI-WAR DEMONSTRATION on MAY 1st at NOON."

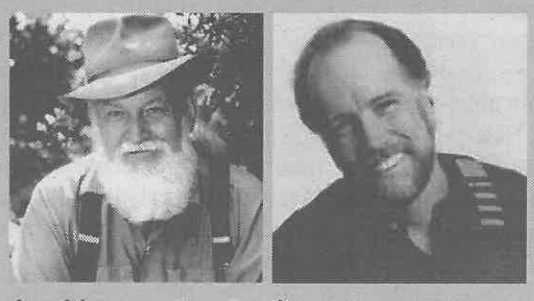
On May Day, a Wobbly brought giant red and black flags for people to carry in the demonstration. Another person brought little cardboard Sabot Kitties with IWW-type slogans, which were later posted around town.

People stood around with anti-war signs, red and black flags, and talked about their life and their thoughts with the person standing next to them. While some people drove by bewildered at the sea of red and black flags in downtown Pensacola, a small few hurled insults. But the great majority of people honked their horns in support of the May Day demonstration. They gave the large crowd that gathered the "thumbs up," thanked us for being there, some thanked us for remembering May Day, and a few even got out of their cars and joined the protest.

Pensacola's first May Day demonstration in some time lasted for two hours, with participation by social justice and anti-war groups, Vets for Peace, and the newly chartered IWW Pensacola General Membership Branch.

Over a dozen Wobblies participated in the event. As the bosses and landlords tighten their screws on the workers here, we are getting more organized. Our numbers are growing. As the Curtis Mayfield song goes, "People Get Ready."

SPECIAL IWW BENEFIT CONCERT



Utah Phillips & John McCutcheon
Thursday June 23 • 8:30pm • $25
The Hot House, Chicago
HotHouse | www.hothouse.net
31 E. Balbo between State & Wabash

Oil driller's life worth $625

The Occupational Safety & Health Administration has fined Nabors Drilling USA $625 for serious safety violations that led to the death of Joshua Riedel July 23, near Pinedale, Wyoming.

OSHA also settled a 2003 ergonomics citation against Supervalu warehouse, reducing its fine for unsafe conditions to $1,000. Workers were required to lift 77 pound weights hundreds of times – 16 tons or more a day – and to twist, reach, bend and lift when loading pieces onto pallets. Several workers suffered lower back pain and shoulder-related muscular skeleton disorders that required corrective surgery. Instead of fixing the conditions, Supervalu will institute a "behavior-based safety management program" which rewards workers for not reporting injuries and punishes them for getting hurt.

Falling wages, vanishing jobs

The British newspaper the *Financial Times* reports that inflation-adjusted wages in the United States are falling at their fastest rate in 14 years, pushing many workers to soup kitchens and the tattered welfare system to survive.

Inflation rose 3.1 percent from March 2004 to March 2005, but salaries went up just 2.4 percent. And it's getting worse. In the final three months of 2004, real wages fell by 0.9 percent. These figures represent wages alone – they do not take account of the dramatic increases in health care premiums many workers have had to take on.

College graduates are making better money than they did in the 1970s. But pretty much everyone else is doing less well. The average family headed by someone without a college degree is earning less, after inflation, than it did in 1973.

At many of the country's largest employers wages are actually falling even without taking inflation into account. Airline workers have seen pre-inflation pay cut by 30 percent or more. Many auto parts workers have taken similar hits. Starting wages at some firms have been slashed by 50 percent or more.

As a result, many workers with full-time jobs face financial ruin. Tens of thousands of Wal-Mart workers are forced to rely on food stamps and free health care for the indigent in order to survive on the poverty wages paid by the U.S.'s largest employer.

While a growing body of research documents the enormous cost to taxpayers of these subsidies, Wal-Mart says workers find its jobs highly desirable – noting that it recently drew 8,000 applicants for 525 positions at a new store in Glendale, Ariz., and 3,000 applications for 300 jobs in outlying Los Angeles.

It apparently does not occur to the company – or at least to its PR hacks – that this says more about the desperate U.S. job situation than about the attractiveness of working for Wal-Mart.

Although the official unemployment rate continues to creep downwards, and is now at 5.2 percent, millions of workers have been forced to take lower-paying jobs and many have been forced out of the labor market altogether. In many cases, workers have taken early retirement because of the bleak job market, only to find their pension plan gutted or their health care dumped overboard.

Hundreds of thousands of workers have exhausted their unemployment benefits, and are no longer counted in the official statistics. And many young workers entering the job market for the first time find themselves in a desperate scramble to find work. Indeed, it appears that almost all of the recent improvement in the U.S. unemployment rate is the result of workers giving up on finding jobs.

No work to be found?

The employment rate for U.S. teenagers has fallen to 36.3 percent, the lowest since the government began tracking teen employment in 1948. In Chicago, only one of every 10 black teenagers found work in 2004. Workers in their 20s are also losing ground, with employment rates dropping from 72.2 percent in 2000 to 67.9 percent last year.

Even new college grads aren't doing so great. Despite "low" unemployment levels, real wages for new college graduates fell for the third year in a row in 2004. Indeed, 16 percent of college grads have been forced to take jobs that do not offer health benefits.

Even when workers find work, those jobs often pay less. Unemployment among Latinos is falling, but so are wages. Latino unemployment is now 5.7 percent, its lowest rate since 2000. But according to a recent study by the Pew Hispanic Center, Latinos now earn 5 percent less than they did two years ago.

Of course, there are some jobs to be had. SeaCode Inc. is floating a scheme to house 600 foreign software engineers on a cruise ship moored three miles off the California coast, offshoring programming work in a more literal sense than usual while keeping the work (and the workers) close at hand to facilitate close supervision. Since the workers would not land on U.S. shores, immigration and wage laws would not apply.

SeaCode says it will pay highly skilled workers a starting wage of $24,000 a year for 12-hour days. (Of course, if the scheme succeeds, someone is bound to offer a less seaworthy vessel staffed with more desperate programmers working for less.)

And the bosses just won special legislation (part of an emergency $82 billion Iraq and Afghanistan military spending bill) to hire temporary workers to fill seasonal jobs in seafood processing, resorts, landscaping and other seasonal businesses. Employers say the bill was necessary because U.S. workers aren't willing to accept the low wages and strenuous conditions these jobs offer.

Wall Street Journal admits workplaces are tyrannies

More than half of bosses admit firing workers for Internet or email use. The May 20 *Wall Street Journal* reports that 26 percent of businesses surveyed state that they have fired workers for "misusing" the Internet. Another 25 percent have terminated employees for e-mail abuse, and 6 percent have canned workers for misusing office phones.

"Although Americans working on U.S. soil enjoy a vast array of rights, those rights don't necessarily apply in the sovereign tyrannies better known as the workplace," the *Journal* reports. "Luckily most corporations are benevolent dictators. Still, there's plenty of room for abuse."

Ludlow: A class act...

continued from page 1

Colorado; Lucy Parsons, the Black/Cherokee wife of Albert Parsons, one of the anarchists hung at the Haymarket trial for standing up to the ruling class; Father Thomas Hagerty, black bearded priest from New Mexico who had been suspended from the Catholic church for encouraging the hard rock miners of Telluride, Colorado, to revolt in 1903; Eugene V. Debs, who organized the rail workers into an industrial union, the American Railway Union, so that porters, engineers, firemen and brakemen struck together for the first time, then ran for president of the U.S. five times as the candidate of the Socialist Party, the last time from the Atlanta Federal Penitentiary where he was sent for refusing to stop telling working people that they should not kill one another in a rich man's war for territory; Daniel DeLeon from the Socialist Labor Party; and many more radical unionists who understood that their union did not have the power alone to fight ruthless capitalism.

Many of the delegates had been inspired by the events at Haymarket Square in 1886 to create a union of workers that included all those forgotten workers, all who did not own the tools of production, regardless of nationality, race, politics, gender, religion, skills, education or any of the other reasons by which we seem to enjoy dividing ourselves.

Father Tom Hagerty had demonstrated graphically in *The Voice of Labor* in May 1905, how all jobs could be organized into "one big union" while each retained democratic control from the grassroots upward. This graphic became known as "Hagerty's Wheel." Father Tom also authored the first preamble to our constitution, which used very clear language to explain how the IWW would differ from craft, trade and business unionism.

Our preamble begins, "The working class and the employing class have nothing in common." Really? Not even if I join the bosses' political parties, invest in the bosses' stock market, fight the bosses' wars, and suck up to capitalism every chance I get? You say they might move my job to China anyway?

"There can be no peace so long as hunger and want are found among millions of working people and the few who make up the employing class have all the good things of life." You mean like bread and roses too? Hey, did you hear that in 2004 an average of 24,000 of the poorest members of our working class starved to death every day on this bountiful planet?

"Between these two classes a struggle must go on until the workers of the world organize as a class, take possession of the earth and the machinery of production, and abolish the wage system."

Are there "union" men standing on the San Francisco Bay Bridge watching capitalists transporting cotton production to a new promised land, intending to use Asian in place of African field hands this time, who still believe they have special privileged deals with their employers because they're white? If so, tell them I've got a hot stock in which they can invest your union pension plans – and your social security. *To Be Continued*



United Airlines abandons retirees

Despite a strike vote from its members, the Aircraft Mechanics Fraternal Association has agreed to $96 million in annual wage and benefit cuts under a new five-year contract reached as a federal bankruptcy court was considering United's plea to tear up its union contracts and unilaterally impose new ones.

The court had already approved United's plea to abandon its underfunded pension plans. That ruling will save United billions of dollars in pension contributions; other airlines say they will demand similar bail-outs. The federal Pension Benefits Guaranty Corporation says the plans were underfunded by $9.8 billion, despite United's huge profits in the 1990s. As a result, 121,000 United retirees will suffer deep cuts in their pensions.

Mechanics, ground crews, pilots and flight attendants are each represented by separate unions. The pilots and flight attendants agreed earlier to five-year deals, but the flight attendants are threatening to strike over the latest round of concessions demanded. The Association of Flight Attendants threatens targeted strikes if United makes unilateral changes to its contract, and has called for the firing of top executives who "have lined their pockets with raises and bonuses while running our airline into the ground."

2-tier scheme has heavy price

Capitalizing on its win in the Southern California supermarket strike, Safeway is offering buy-outs to some 7,000 workers at its 293 Vons and Pavilions stores in order to take advantage of the cheaper wages and benefits paid new hires under the UFCW contract.

Safeway has earmarked $50 million to offer buy-outs of up to $35,000 to a third of its veteran workers – saving the chain an average of $6 per worker per hour, plus millions in health care costs. The UFCW and Safeway are arguing over whether the company can offer the buy-outs without reaching agreement with the union over the terms.

The UFCW fears the scheme would decimate payments to its health and pension trust funds.

If the plan goes through, the Ralphs and Albertsons chains are likely to implement similar plans. Safeway reported profits of $131.3 million for the first quarter of 2005.

Binding arbitration

The Air Line Pilots Association has sued Alaska Airlines, trying to overturn the results of binding arbitration that cut their pay by as much a third. The pilots' contract has had a no-strike clause for 20 years, and so when two years of negotiations got nowhere the union put its fate in the hands of a federal arbitrator. He gave management everything it asked for.

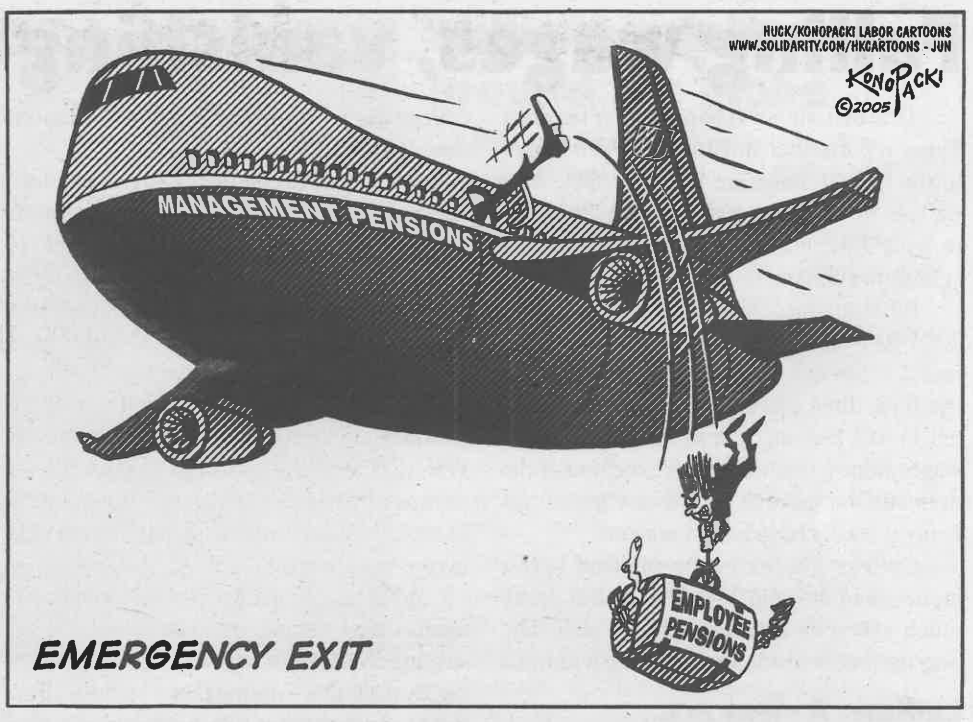
The airline also fired nearly 500 union baggage-area workers in Seattle, replacing them with subcontracted workers. Workers began receiving phone calls that they no longer had jobs at 3 a.m.; others learned only when they showed up for work and found their access cards had been deactivated.

New York state judge backs tax-funded union busting

A New York State law barring employers receiving state funds from union-busting has been overturned by a federal judge, who ruled it violated U.S. policy. The Healthcare Association of New York State had challenged the law, saying it infringed upon their "right" to use taxpayer funds to fight workers' efforts to organize. A similar California law was overturned last year; the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals is now reconsidering that case.

Canadian union membership

Statistics Canada reports that 31 percent of Canadian workers belong to unions, down 7 percent since the early 1980s as stable jobs have been replaced by temporary and part-time positions. Unionization in the "commercial sector" is around 20 percent, while less than 14 percent of workers under 25 years old are in unions – a number that approaches the unionization rate of the United States.



AFL-CIO debates whether it has a future

A fierce battle is being waged inside union offices as the AFL-CIO heads into its July 25 convention in Chicago. That convention will consider proposals to revitalize the Federation and whether to elect John Sweeney to a third five-year term as AFL president.

Five dissident unions – the Teamsters, Laborers, United Food and Commercial Workers, Service Employees International Union, and Unite Here, which together account for 35 percent of the AFL-CIO's nearly 13 million members – are pressing for new leadership, and "reform" measures that would increase the power of the Federation's largest affiliates and eliminate nearly all AFL activities except for political campaigning and financial support to organizing drives. The Carpenters union, which is no longer affiliated to the AFL-CIO, also supports the group.

"The labor movement is on life support," Laborers President Terence O'Sullivan told a Teamsters-sponsored "Unity" conference in March. "The American labor movement at the level of the AFL-CIO has lost its way... It's lost its energy. It's lost its hope. And that's a crime," added Unite Here's John Wilhelm.

Wilhelm and O'Sullivan are considering running against Sweeney in July. Sweeney has decried the "selfish and destructive" voices that are "tearing at the fabric of our movement," and rejected calls to step down.

SEIU President Andy Stern has threatened to pull his 1.8 million members out of the AFL-CIO if Sweeney is re-elected. The Teamsters and UFCW are also considering quitting. "We either change this AFL-CIO or we build something stronger that really can change workers lives," Stern told the Unity conference.

The AFL-CIO has eliminated 167 jobs at its headquarters. Field representative positions have been slashed, and the AFL-CIO's insipid magazine, *America@Work*, closed. However, the Federation plans to increase its political fund to $47.5 million a year and to redirect other funds to organizing, mostly in the form of rebates to member unions.

AFL-CIO reserve funds have fallen from $61 million to $31 million since 1995, and Federation membership continues to fall.

The Industrial Workers of the World's

CENTENARY CONFERENCE

A celebration of 100 years of workers' struggle

JUNE 25 & 26, 2005 • CHICAGO

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INDUSTRIAL WORKERS OF THE WORLD · I W W · CENTENNIAL · 1905 - 2005

Saturday, June 25
The Once and Future IWW
SESSIONS INCLUDE: The IWW's legacy of interracial organizing; IWW and Internationalism; Remembrances of the Fellow Workers who came before us; Stan Weir & Marty Glaberman; Learning Wobbly ideas through song; The IWW press; and much more. Complete program is posted on www.iww.org.

Sunday, June 26 Alternative Models of Worker Organizing
The IWW is experimenting with organizing models that rely on worker self-organizing, direct action, and community support instead of legal recognition and routine contracts. IWW members and workers and organizers from other efforts across the US and Canada will come together to discuss lessons learned from their struggles, and the potential of new models of organizing.

Conference Registration and Fees:
Regular Registration: $45
IWW Members/Students/Seniors/Unemployed: $30
Registration includes Saturday and Sunday lunch and conference materials. Breakfast is available for those utilizing conference housing.
• Saturday's "Fan the Flames of Discontent" concert is $10 to conference registrants, $20 to the public.
Please check the box on the registration form if you will attend the Friday evening dinner and/or Saturday evening concert.

Housing is available at Hostelling International Chicago. The additional cost for conference housing is $35 a night. Breakfast is included.

Registration deadline is June 15.
Please complete a registration form for each person attending. Payments can be made with one check to cover the registrants from your organization.
Make checks payable to IWW.
Mail to: IWW Centenary, PO Box 13476, Philadelphia, PA 19101
For information contact 215-222-1905 or centenary@iww.org

Please return to: IWW Centenary, PO Box 13476, Phila., PA 19101

Registration Fee
❑ Regular $45 ❑ Discount (IWW Member/Student/Retired/Unemployed) $30

Housing
❑ I would like conference housing and my housing cost of $35 per night is included in my registration payment.
I need housing for the night(s) of: _____
❑ I would like to share a room with _____
(leave blank if you don't care and you will be paired with someone of the same sex)

Saturday Concert:
❑ I will attend the Saturday evening concert "Fan the Flames of Discontent" and my $10 is included (concert details at www.iww.org/chicago)

Special Needs _____

Contact Information
Name _____
Phone _____
E-Mail _____
Address _____
City _____ State/Prov _____ ZIP/Postal Code _____
Affiliation (if any) _____

Dead peasants, dead janitors, wealthy bosses

BY RENDIDO AMO

Washington State unanimously passed legislation in February to ban 'Dead Peasant' or 'Dead Janitors' insurance gambits perpetrated by large corporations such as Enron, Pitney-Bowes, Proctor & Gamble, Nestle, and Wal-Mart. The legislation makes it illegal for companies to take out insurance on the lives of their workers so that the corporations can collect as beneficiaries upon their deaths.

Last year Wal-Mart was sued by six families who claimed they were never told about the corporate-owned life insurance policies, or COLIs, on their workers' lives. Insurance companies estimate that 25% of all Fortune 500 companies have had COLI policies on over 6 million people. Wal-Mart alone has taken out over 350,000 such policies. Wal-Mart received $64,000 when an overworked employee died of a heart attack. When a worker was killed in a store robbery, National Convenience Stores made $250,000. The families of these workers got nothing.

Corporations often use dead peasant money to fund benefits for their executives. An Enron subsidiary used COLI money to support retirement payments to its execs accumulating an $80 million treasure chest.

Lawsuits against Wal-Mart include a New Hampshire case in which the plaintiff, the wife of a lower-level manager for whom a COLI was setup, blamed the firm for her husband's death. Forced to work 75 to 90 hours a week without days off and to do heavy duty assignments when the store was short of help, the fellow eventually died of a coronary trying to lift a 27-inch TV into a car for a customer. He was 48 years old.

The settlement was large enough to be listed in Wal-Mart's 2004 annual financial report. As of April, four other law suits are pending in Texas and Oklahoma by families asking for judgements against Wal-Mart and other companies purchasing COLIs.

In January 2003, Wal-Mart agreed to pay $10.4 million to the families of 380 employees who died while they were covered by COLIs according to the documents filed at the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 5th Circuit in New Orleans. During the time it owned the policies, Wal-Mart received $30.7 million in insurance proceeds from the deaths of the 380 employees, according to the settlement agreement. Wal-Mart received between $65,000 and $80,000 when hourly wage workers died, and hundreds of thousands of dollars when management employees died.

Victims of these scams reveal some incredible stories. The family of Margaret Reynolds, a 62-year-old Ohio woman who died in 1998 received a $21,000 death benefit from her employer, C.M. Holdings, from a policy she took out. C.M. Holdings also named itself as a beneficiary on a policy set up at the same time and got $180,000. When Margaret Reynold's son found out about this, he was more than angered, since the company had refused to purchase a special wheelchair out of her benefit funds needed during her struggle with Lou Gehrig's Disease.

The family of Felipe M. Tillman has another story about C.M. Holdings. When this worker died the company made off with $339,302, but his family received nothing.

At one time, premiums on such policies were tax-free, as were the payments to beneficiaries, so companies that set up these life insurance gambits got the benefits of double tax shelters. Not only that, corporations borrowed against these same policies and deducted for the loans from their tax pay-outs. As a result, the public has lost billions in tax revenues. When laws were passed in some states that have sought to regulate purchases of COLIs, corporations have often been able to make purchases out of state at corporate headquarters in order to dodge regulations in states where workers are protected.

Paper, Allied-Industrial, Chemical and Energy Workers (PACE) launched a campaign in the 1990s against the scams, seeking national legislation to force companies to disclose the existence of 'dead-peasant'/COLI insurance to workers and to ensure individual employee's consent to use them. At Dow Chemical, PACE members and other workers asked the human resources department about the insurance. They were told no policies existed. The 21,000 workers – including 1,500 PACE members – later found out the Dow Chemical board approved the scheme without anyone's knowledge.

Since the news of widespread 'dead peasant' insurance abuses by corporations was portrayed in headline stories in the *Houston Chronicle* and the *Wall Street Journal* in 2002, several states have put regulations on the books to force companies to ask for consent for COLIs from employees, and to make information available about all policies held on workers. But federal laws are necessary to regulate the activities of large international corporations across state lines.

Union wins voodoo charge

Harborside Healthcare has withdrawn charges with the National Labor Relations Board that SEIU Local 2020 had turned to voodoo to intimidate workers in its Wakefield, Mass., nursing home, conceding that they were unable to substantiate the claim. Workers voted 41-22 in favor of unionization in March.

This is the second recent case where an employer has turned to the Board to protect it against voodoo-inspired unionists. Both cases involved Haitian workers who, management claims, used their magical powers to win union representation elections. (Why they don't instead use these powers to win something more substantial, like living wages, is not explained.)

Fight for Shorter Hours



Lowe's overtime suit

An Ohio federal court judge has certified a class action lawsuit against Lowe's Home Centers, which alleges that the company systematically failed to pay salaried employees for their overtime. They are regularly scheduled to work 48 hours or more, under a "fluctuating workweek" plan. Under the scheme, Lowe's divides the actual number of hours worked into the employees' base salary, and uses that figure as the basis for compensating overtime – which is paid not at time-and-a-half, but at 50 percent. As a result, the more hours employees work, the less overtime pay they receive.

The Labor Department says such systems are legal if employees' hours fluctuate from week to week, they receive a fixed salary rather than an hourly wage, minimum wage laws are complied with, and the schemes are mutually agreed to.

The Lowe's plaintiffs allege that these conditions were not met. Lowe's must now provide a list of all employees covered by the scheme, so they can decide whether they wish to join in the lawsuit.

Canadian vacations short

Workers in several European countries enjoy more time off than Canadian and U.S. workers, according to the first Global Vacation Deprivation survey commissioned by the online Expedia travel agency. France leads the pack with an average of 39 vacation days per year; followed by Germany with 27, the Netherlands with 25 and Great Britain at 23. North Americans are at the bottom of the list with an average of 21 vacation days per year in Canada, and a paltry 12 in the U.S.

"Many European governments mandate ... between four and five weeks of paid vacation," explains sociologist Beverly Beuermann-King. "Canadians are entitled to a base of two weeks paid vacation, and there are no national requirements in the U.S."

Considering how little time we receive, workers are quite generous! Canadian and U.S. employees forego three days per employee on average. In total, Canadian workers gave back a staggering 40 million days! In comparison, the average employee in France gives back just a single day and the average Brit gives back just half a day.

How much can you work?

A psychology graduate student at Stockholm University has evaluated the effects of 12-hour shifts and short recovery periods (less than 16 hours) between shifts, concluding that longer shifts do not necessarily cause fatigue and sleep disorders as long as there is adequate recovery time. More days off seemed to improve recovery and counteract negative effects of extended shifts. On the other hand, short recovery time between shifts seriously increased fatigue.

Swing shift fight

MacSteel workers picketed the company's headquarters in Jackson, Michigan, April 27, protesting the company's decision to return to swing shifts, in which they rotate between days, afternoons and nights. Union President Brian Casto said workers don't like swing shifts because once they get adjusted to one shift, they have to change to another and it tires them mentally and physically. "You never know when you're coming and going," Casto said.

Cause of death: Overtime

The Associated Press reports that despite a significant increase in the number of containers handled at the Port of Charleston, South Carolina, the number of crane operators has remained the same. As a result, workers are putting in multiple shifts without a break, leading to at least three fatalities in recent accidents.

Long hours kill rail workers

Many railroad accidents are caused by overworked and chronically sleep deprived locomotive engineers and conductors, according to a report in the April 24 *Los Angles Times*. The article cites several examples of fatal accidents where workers had clocked as many as 28 hours straight, working the long, erratic shifts that are common in the railroad industry.

Tired crews have caused some of the deadliest freight train wrecks of the last 20 years, according to federal accident reports. National Transportation Safety Board records show that entire crews – often operating on only a few hours' sleep – have nodded off at the controls of mile-long freight trains weighing 10,000 tons.

Regulators believe that fatigue underlies many train accidents, but leave most cases to the railroads to review. Not surprisingly, their reports attribute accidents to crew error rather than to scheduling practices. However, a 1997 survey of more than 1,500 freight workers found that about 80% had reported to work while tired, extremely tired or exhausted. When a researcher found that engineers who put in more than 60 hours a week were at least twice as likely to be in an accident as those working 40 hours, the rail industry association fired him.

NStar utility workers strike against 80-hour weeks

Some 2,000 NStar workers are on strike as we go to press, protesting round-the-clock schedules and cuts in the Massachusetts utility's maintenance staff. The union is demanding more workers to maintain equipment and electrical and gas lines.

Over the past decade NStar has eliminated 120 maintenance jobs, forcing employees to work longer hours and resulting in more accidents. As a result of 12- 16-hour shifts, workers are putting in as many as 1,800 overtime hours a year, complaining that they can't work safely because of fatigue and that basic inspection and maintenance work is left undone because of insufficient staff.

In an effort to break the strike, NStar cut off health care benefits to striking workers on the second day of picketing.

Wide, Wide World of Sweatshops

Pittsburgh Wobs joined with others in the Pittsburgh Anti-Sweatshop Community Alliance on May Day outside the Pittsburgh Pirates' stadium, distributing the newest edition of their sweatfree baseball cards and keep pressure up on the team to do something about the conditions under which its logo merchandise is manufactured.

Four years ago, the Pirates had four anti-sweatshop activists arrested for protesting outside a Pirates game. But on April 11, Pirates officials met with PASCA activists to discuss the situation. PASCA is seeking multi-year agreements with manufacturers, tied to independent monitoring to make sure workers' rights are protected; team officials agreed to take the issue up with Major League Baseball, which licenses team logos to sweatshops around the world.

Colorado sit-in wins

After six years of trying to persuade Colorado University administrators to abandon the college's reliance on sweatshop labor to make its logo apparel, students seized the office of Interim Chancellor Phil DiStefano's April 27, refusing to leave until the college affiliated with the Worker Rights Consortium, which independently monitors factory conditions. They won the next day.

Tomato pickers move forward

Fresh from its victory over Taco Bell, the Coalition of Immokalee Workers is calling on other fast food operators to join the agreement to pay a penny more per pound for Florida tomatoes and adopt a code of conduct requiring suppliers to respect farm workers' rights. The CIW has approached McDonald's, Subway and Burger King; it also plans to appeal to supermarkets to increase pay and monitor suppliers.

The CIW has documented several cases in which farm workers were beaten and held against their will by labor contractors. Pickers earn 40 cents for every 32-pound bucket of tomatoes, a rate that has remained unchanged for decades. Growers say they can not afford to pay more; the penny a pound is supposed to be passed along to the workers.

Sweatshops conference

The annual United Students Against Sweatshops summer retreat will be held at Loyola University of Chicago, August 12-15. For details and to register, www.students-againstsweatshops.org/register.php

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Review: Alternatives to globalization

REVIEW BY JOHN GORMAN

Alternatives to Economic Globalization, A better world is possible, John Cavanaugh and Gerry Mander, eds., 2nd edition, Berrett-Kohler, 2004.

The world, despite the rosy predictions and pronouncements of the true believers in globalization, is in dreadful shape and not getting any better. There are several important films and books, among them "The Take" and "The Corporation," John Perkins' *Confessions of an Economic Hit Man* and Jeremy Bresher and Tim Costello's *Global Village or Global Pillage,* to tell us how we got here and what might be done. *Alternatives*, however, lives up to its name, not only by describing the harm done by bodies like the World Trade Organization, the World Bank and the International Monetary fund, but also by going into much greater detail regarding other ways of thinking and acting, and refuting those who assume as a matter of faith that the only alternative to globalization is economic and political pandemonium.

Alternatives starts off with a description of the Breton Woods agreement of 1944 intended to prevent the economic chaos and collapse that followed World War I from coming on the heels of the Second World War as well. How the organizations established for such laudable goals morphed during the Eighties into the unholy trinity of the World Bank, the World Trade Organization and the International Monetary fund we know today makes an interesting story in itself.

The book's indictment of these villains is a strong one, demonstrating that globalization has failed to live up to its own proclaimed objectives. The poor are not better off. The middle class is in danger of destruction, while the gap between the haves and the have-nots grows ever wider worldwide with troubling political implications. The environment is literally collapsing as a system that depends on externalizing what should be internal costs comes to dominate the globe, consuming ever more, and the commons of clean water, clean air, parks and public lands – once viewed as the property of all humanity – are privatized, converted into waste dumps or amenities only available only to those who can pay for them. In short, globalization depends on a set of practices that are simply unsustainable in a finite world with limited resources.

Cavanaugh and Mander realize the conflict over globalization is not economic but ideological. To those who see endless economic growth as the greatest good, corporate rule seems an unmitigated benefit, with some shortcomings, of course, but nothing that time and more globalization won't take care of. Anyone who opposes this new Millennium is clearly a dreamer living in the past, if not a dangerous Luddite, determined to destroy the future.

To those who fought the WTO in Seattle and Cancun and battled the Free Trade Area of the Americas agreement in Miami, globalization is a direct attack, not only on prosperity, but also on democracy itself – depriving citizens everywhere of control of their lives and livelihoods, substituting the deliberations of increasingly remote and secretive corporate boards for the public political processes which are supposed to give people input into these decisions.

As the editors point out in one of their most alarming chapters, this lack of input has significance far beyond working conditions, costs and prices. Increasing corporate efficiency requires, not just uniformity of production, but also uniformity of consumption and consciousness. Everyone must be persuaded to want the same things delivered in the same way under the same conditions. Everyone's vision of "the good life" must be the same.

Cultural diversity, while sometimes quaint, is certainly not to be taken seriously, let alone encouraged. On the contrary, the world is to be homogenized by mass media, owned and controlled by as few corporate entities as possible. Disturbing reports are not to reach the public, and alternative media are to be discredited or starved into submission. The corporate world to come will be served by THE television station, THE radio station and THE newspaper, THE magazine and THE publishing house, perhaps with different titles but certainly with virtually identical ownership and content. Only the names, dates and places will change.

The battle lines are drawn, and Cavanaugh and Mander have answered the challenge magnificently, not only exposing corporations but also giving scores of examples of workable alternatives they prefer, ranging from Argentina through Africa to Indonesia. Even the American Yakima tribe's responsible handling of their timber resource is recognized.

Those whose commitment to globalization is an article of faith are not likely to be moved. But those who have not made up their minds about global capitalism, and who seek detailed information on alternative institutions, and how they might work to restore economic prosperity and even sanity to our world, will come away well equipped for the debate which grows ever louder and more critical as the century unfolds.

The last chapter of the book, Global to Local, is the shortest – perhaps an unconscious admission by the editors that there is not much the ordinary person can do. But the suggestions given are both concrete and feasible, and the potential power of socially and politically conscious unions is clearly understood. The authors' list of recommendations may not be complete, but no one can come away feeling there is nothing to be done.

If the book has any drawback beyond annoying grammatical glitches, it is in its very length and detail. While libraries and academics interested in the subject will find it a valuable addition, the ordinary reader may grow weary of the 345-page narrative and find it hard to digest. On the other hand, the listings of groups working toward alternatives to economic globalization and useful tools and indicators at the back of the book make *Alternatives* useful for anyone with a serious interest in the outcome of this struggle.

Farewell, Fellow Worker George Dolph, 1948-2005

IWW member George Dolph died in May, after suffering a stroke last December. A part-time teacher at Philadelphia-area colleges, FW Dolph was a regular presence on the picket lines at Borders Books in 1996.

He was also active in the Green Party; when not working for a better planet, his passion was making memory jars.

San Diego: A tale of two May Days

BY ROCKY NEPTUNE

While San Diego's upscale progressive community flocked to a corporate-sponsored Earth Day festival May 1, maquiladora workers and their supporters gathered in a working-class barrio of Tijuana, Cinco y Diez, to celebrate "Dia Internacional de Los y Las Trabajadoras."

While the enlightened liberals strolled through Balboa Park, past displays by corporate sponsors like anti-union Starbucks, just 20 miles away workers told stories of abuse, theft of wages, broken promises, unenforced laws and crooked government officials.

The Tijuana workers drew hundreds of spectators as they passed out flyers and held street theater, sharing their struggle to defend workers' rights, expose the injustices in the maquiladoras factories, and force the Tijuana Labor Board to enforce the law, rather than support U.S. corporations.

The peverse appropriation of May Day by major corporations reflects the state of the "movement" in San Diego. Working-class folks are being displaced in vast numbers as affordable apartment buildings are bought by speculators for condo conversions and uncontrolled rents continue to skyrocket.

Meanwhile factories and warehouses are being torn down to make way for new hotels and office buildings. The gentrification of San Diego is forcing even the middle class to move away, as service jobs are filled by 10,000 Mexican workers who cross the border each day to work for minimum wages.

Those Mexicans who live along the California/Baja border who do not have green cards are also caught in a vicious squeeze between escalating inflation due to the influx of dollars and the greed of the bosses.

Mexican border factories are moving to even lower wage countries like China, with its "free" prison labor. Using the threat of moving, many maquiladoras force workers to sign contracts denying their basic rights.

In mid-May, a conference in defense of workers' rights was held in Mexicali. Participants highlighted the Flor de Baja maquiladora factory, which violates every Mexican labor law on the books. Also in May, the Centro de Informacion para Trabajadoras y Trabajadores of Tijuana held a rally outside the San Diego headquarters of wireless phone maker Kyocera, which is dumping its 1,400 workers in Tijuana in favor of cheap labor in China. Meanwhile, the Colectiva Feminista Binacional has begun sponsoring study trips to learn first-hand the conditions faced by female maquiladoras workers.

Organizers of the May Day rally in Tijuana spotlighted San Diego's Cardinal Health Corp., which recently bought Alaris Medical Systems with more than 1,000 employees in Tijuana, and immediately transferred most of the work to its El Florido facility, located on the far outskirts of Tijuana.

Since there is no public transportation to the plant, workers must rely on company buses which only run in the morning and evening. Under Alaris' almost slave-like contracts, wages are based not only on hours worked, but on "perfect attendance and punctuality." So, if a worker misses one day, they not only lose the wages for their 10.5-hour day but half their week's pay (about $45). Alaris forced its employees to sign new contracts or to resign. Those who tried to organize opposition were fired.

Rather than let exploitative corporations usurp the workers' day of solidarity each May 1st; perhaps the liberals can create a Workers Justice Day. They could pool their money, hire a maquiladora factory for a day, get up before dawn to ride a bus for hours, work under harassing and stressful conditions, and then have their wages stolen at the end of the day. A stroll through the park, marveling at the exhibits and lies of Starbucks, just might make them unsure whether they've really done anything to save the Earth – or the people who toil in miserable conditions on it.

One in seven London workers receives poverty wages

London's Living Wage Unit reports that one in seven London workers are paid at rates which leave their income below poverty levels. The Unit calculates a "poverty threshold wage" of £5.80 an hour (US$10.90).

Quickie strike wins contract

When a convention-services firm refused to sign a contract it had negotiated last year, IATSE Local 835 threw up picket lines at the Orange County (Florida) Convention Center as a trade show was setting up. Teamsters honored the picket line, and after four hours the boss capitulated.

IWW

1905-2005: Celebrating a Century of Revolutionary Industrial Unionism

Tacoma, May 29: Centennial Rally, 11 a.m., Wright Park (Division and 6th). Speakers include Eric Chase, Arthur J. Miller and an Olympia Pizza Time striker. email: bayou@blarg.net.

June 10-12, Vancouver, B.C.: Pacific Northwest Labor History Association Conference. IWW General Secretary-Treasurer Alexis Buss is among the speakers. www.pnlha.org.

June 17-19, Hartford, CT: A weekend of cultural events, films and discussions about the legacy of the IWW. Saturday, Charlie King and Karen Brandow in concert at the Charter Oak Cultural Center. Sunday, Joyce Kornbluh, author of *Rebel Voices*. details at: www.homestead.com/wobblies/

June 23-26, Chicago: Centenary Week! Utah Phillips and John McCutcheon concert, followed by conferences on the IWW's founding. (see announcement, page 8)

Sept. 6 - Nov. 23, University of Michigan Library, Ann Arbor: Exhibit commemorating 100 years of the IWW with materials from the Labadie Collection. Open to the public.

Sept. 15-17, University of Missouri, Kansas City: Conference on Radical Economics in the 20th Century.

October 21-23, Wayne State University, Detroit: North American Labor History Conference. Will focus on the IWW's first 100 years and the centenary of the Russian Revolution.

More details, as well as a timeline of IWW history and other materials, can be found at www.iww.org/projects/centenary, which is regularly updated to include new events.

Radical Economics & the Labor Movement

A conference celebrating the 100th anniversary of the founding of the Industrial Workers of the World

September 15-17, 2005
University of Missouri – Kansas City

The conference theme is the role of radical economics in the international labor movement. Topics covered will include syndicalism past and present, radical economics and democracy, industrial relations, Latin American labor, the economics of the IWW, and Sraffa and organized labor. There will also be a session on radical economics and the IWW in song and theater.

Come participate in a conference that occurs only once every 100 years.

Conference hosts are Fred Lee, professor of economics at UMKC and a long-standing member of the IWW, and *Industrial Worker* editor Jon Bekken. The conference is co-sponsored by the IWW and the Union for Radical Political Economics.

Complete information – including tentative schedule, registration form, accommodations details, and costs – is at: http://cas.umkc.edu/econ/iwwconf/

BOOKS FOR REBELLIOUS WORKERS



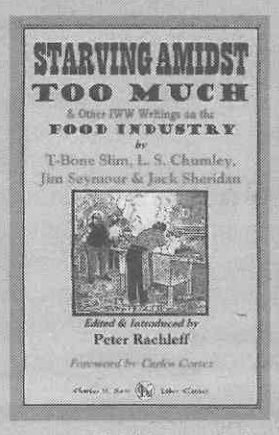
Wobblies! A Graphic History
Edited by Paul Buhle & Nicole Schulman

The stories of the hard-rock miners' shooting wars, young Elizabeth Gurly Flynn (the "Rebel Girl" of contemporary sheet music), the first -sit-down strikes and Free Speech fights, the Pageant for Paterson orchestrated in Madison Square Garden, bohemian radicals John Reed and Louise Bryant, field-hand revolts and lumber workers' strikes, wartime witch hunts, government prosecutions and mob lynching, Mexican-American uprisings in Baja, and Mexican peasant revolts led by Wobblies, hilarious and sentimental songs created and later revived—all are here, and much, much more.

The IWW, which has been organizing workers since 1905, is often cited yet elusive to scholars because of its eclectic and controversial cultural and social character. *Wobblies!* presents the IWW whole, scripted and drawn by old-time and younger Wobbly and IWW-inspired artists.

"Tell the bosses to go to hell and buy an extra copy of this wonderful history. Give it to an exploited friend or just leave it in a public place. On the centenary of the IWW, we should be replanting the seeds of rebellion."

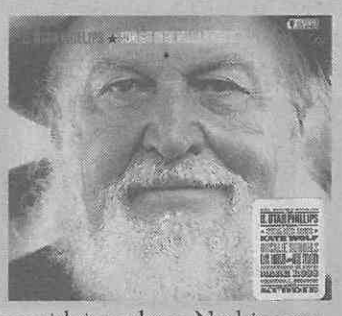
—Mike Davis, author of City of Quartz and Planet of Slums ***306 pages, $25.00***



Starving Amidst Too Much and Other IWW Writings on the Food Industry edited by Peter Rachleff

This is a book about the irrepressible conflict between the poorly paid workers who feed the world and the multi-billionaire corporate powers that make the rules and grab the profits. Reproduced here are classic documents on the "food question" by four old-time IWWs. T-Bone Slim provides a detailed critique of the industry - with penetrating insight and knockout black humor. Organizer L.S. Chumley portrays the horrid living and working conditions of hotel and restaurant workers circa 1918, stressing the need for direct action. Wobbly troubadour Jim Semour, with his inspired saga of "The Dishwasher" reflects on the possibilities of a radically different diet. Jack Sheridan's fascinating 1959 survey of the role of food in ancient and modern civilization, especially in economic development, is also a crash-course in the materialist conception of history at its Wobbly soapboxer best. In his introduction, historian/activist Peter Rachleff traces the history of the food-workers' self-organization, and brings the book up to date with a look at current struggles to break the haughty power of an ecocidal agribusiness and the union-busting fast-food chains. Plus a foreword by Carlos Cortez. ***128 pages, $12.00***

Utah Phillips: Starlight on the Rails



This four CD boxed set contains 63 stories and 61 songs, spanning over forty years of Utah's performing career. Utah says, "The way I see it is this: if you take most of what you sing from people, sooner or later these songs will help you disappear into the people. If you have listened to their voices close enough, the people will embrace your songs and make them their own. But they will not embrace you, because they will no longer know who you are. You will know the people and will be able to vanish into them. Nothing you have given to the people will be owned by anybody but owned by everybody. If you want that, you will turn away from possession. You will turn away from riches and power and fame. For these songs to do their work they must give up your name and be free in every way."

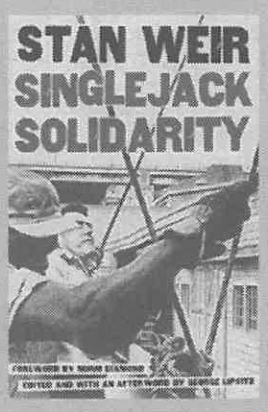
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Solidarity Unionism: Rebuilding the Labor Movement from Below by Staughton Lynd

Staughton Lynd discusses how small groups of workers have created new forms of democratic organization, and argues that building a revolutionary labor movement today means nurturing such experiments in the face of corporate power. A modest, but deeply optimistic, search for possibilities. 63 pages, **$12.00**



Singlejack Solidarity by Stan Weir
Edited and with an afterword by George Lipsitz
Foreword by Norm Diamond

Written throughout Weir's decades as a blue-collar worker and labor educator, *Singlejack Solidarity* offers a rare look at modern life and social relations as seen from the factory, dockside, and the shop floor. This volume analyzes issues central to working-class life today, such as the human costs of automation, union policies, mass media images of work, and intergenerational relations in working-class families. It also provides humorous commentaries, historical vignettes, and moving portraits of people Weir encountered, including James Baldwin and C. L. R. James. Gathered here for the first time, Weir's writings are equal parts memoir, labor history, and polemic; taken together, they document a crucial chapter in the life story of working-class America. ***384 pages, $20.00***

Punching Out & Other Writings by Martin Glaberman, edited & introduced by Staughton Lynd

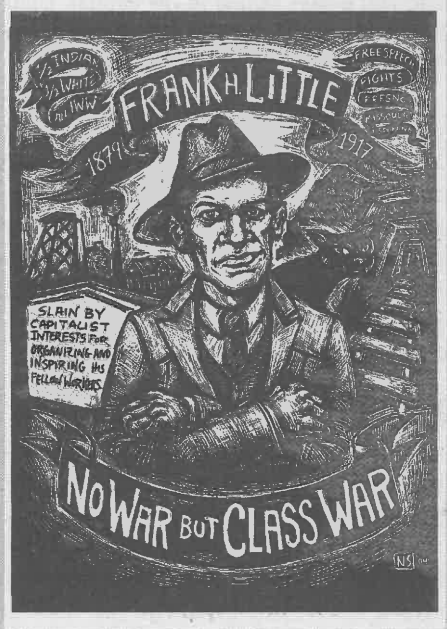
A collection of writings by autoworker, historian and poet Marty Glaberman. This collection reprints Glaberman's classic writings on the union movement, Marxism, the challenges facing radical movements in the 1970s and 1980s, the collapse of the Soviet Bloc, and a selection of labor poetry. Among the gems to be found are Egghead comics, an appreciation of C.L.R. James, and of course a reprint of the classic pamphlet on business unionism, Punching Out. Glaberman celebrated the possibilities of informal work groups both to resist capitalism and to run industry once we've dumped the bosses off our backs. 231 pages, ***$14.00***



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Burying Haymarket

"Trainwreck of Ideologies Part 2 – Historical Spin." Labor Beat (37 S. Ashland, Chicago IL 60607), cablecast March 2005, 30 minutes. $15, VHS or DVD.

The legacy of the Haymarket martyrs continues to resonate around the world. More than a century after police attacked workers protesting the May 3, 1886, shooting of picketers at the McCormick Works – sparking a series of events culminating in the judicial murder of four anarchists (a fifth committed suicide on the eve of his execution) – Chicago officials continue to attack our fellow workers.

Having already killed them, they now try to bury our fellow workers' memory, to cover up their anti-capitalist ideas, to strip their story of its revolutionary significance. As part of this effort, the city has now erected a hideous, politically neutered stick-figure sculpture that carefully evades any reference to the events, or to class struggle. This travesty is the result of a deal among politicians, the Police Dept., the Chicago Federation of Labor, and the Illinois Labor History Society.

The surreal Sept. 14 ceremony introducing this faceless affront to labor history featured Chicago Federation of Labor President Dennis Gannon explaining that labor and police are now friends and embracing his old high school chum Mark Donohue, president of the Fraternal Order of Police. While Officer Donohue and a host of politicians prattled on, no anarchist was invited to speak.

"Trainwreck of Ideologies II" documents these sorry proceedings, cutting between the official program and the protestors (including several Wobblies) on hand to defend our martyrs' memory. For the most part it lets the events speak for themselves, though the producers do cut from the CFL leader's embrace of the policeman to a clip of him being arrested on a picket line a few years before.

The protestors and a Lucy Parsons reenactor provide a running counterpart that makes the crime being perpetrated against historical memory inescapable. Although it can be painful to view this disgraceful event, LaborBeat has performed an important service in documenting it.

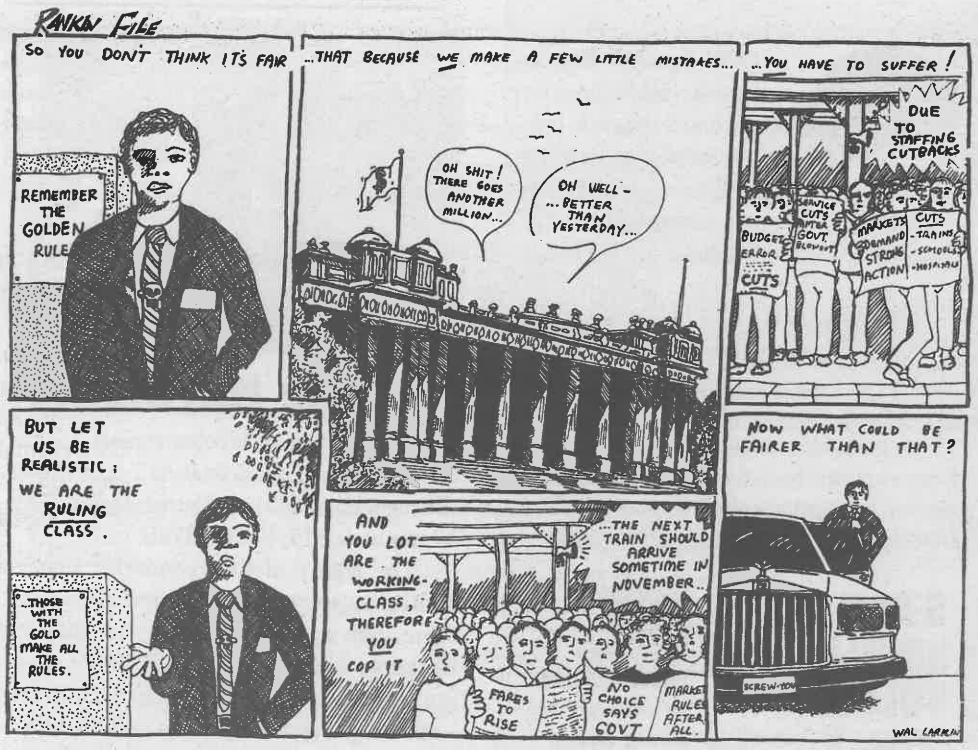
This video is a sequel to "Trainwreck of Ideologies," which documented anarchist protests against a Park Service ceremony declaring the Haymarket Monument in Waldheim Cemetery a historic landmark.

Labor Beat has been producing and cablecasting labor video for close to 20 years, and will broadcast its 500th show next year. While AFL-CIO officials have lamented hostile media coverage, these rank-and-file workers have taken matters into their own hands, making sure that Chicago-area workers can watch labor programming every week. Its web site (www.laborbeat.org) includes a catalog of programs (many of which would be suitable for broadcast anywhere) and information on how you can support this important work.

Youngstown scab hall of shame back online

Striking *Youngstown* (Ohio) *Vindicator* workers are once again posting pictures of scabs loaned to their boss by his fellow publishers to www.valleyvoiceonline.com. The page had been taken down by the union's Internet Service Provider after the *Vindicator* complained (April *IW*, p. 5) that the well-paid scab reporters were being harassed.

Reporters, classified ad staff and circulation managers have been on strike since Nov. 16. The paper has kept publishing with the aid of union scabs and boss solidarity.



Global actions slam IBM job cuts

A global day of action May 23 protested IBM's plans to cut more than 10,000 jobs. The Alliance@IBM, Local 1701 of the Communication Workers of America, joined unions, work councils and IBM workers worldwide in a show of solidarity to protest IBM's plan.

Lee Conrad, national coordinator of Alliance@IBM, said, "The job cuts are being used to appease Wall Street and boost the company's stock price, at the expense of workers, our families and our company. Employees also are asking how IBM can fire 13,000 employees while simultaneously buying back $5 billion in stock."

A joint workers' statement on the cuts noted that "IBM is a wealthy and successful company," and demanded negotiations over the restructuring plan and a policy of equalizing wages and working conditions around the world. It was signed by unions in Austria, Belgium, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Netherlands, Sweden and the UK.

12 million trapped in forced labour

At least 12.3 million people are trapped in forced labour around the world, the International Labour Office reports in a new study. The report, *A global alliance against forced labour,* says that some 9.5 million are in Asia; 1.3 million in Latin America and the Caribbean; 660,000 in sub-Saharan Africa; 260,000 in the Middle East and North Africa; 360,000 in industrialized countries; and 210,000 in transition countries.

Forced economic exploitation is common in such sectors as agriculture, construction, brick-making and informal sweatshop manufacturing, as well as in the sex trade. Children comprise more than 40 percent of all forced labour victims.

Most forced labour today is exacted in developing countries where older forms of forced labour are sometimes transmuting into newer ones, notably in a range of informal sector activities. Debt bondage frequently affects minorities that have long experienced discrimination, and locks them in a vicious cycle of poverty from which they find it ever more difficult to escape.

Bahraini workers strike

Workers in the Gulf state of Bahrain struck after the firing of four workers – each with at least 10 years on the job – involved in forming a union, and held a series of protests outside the gates of the Olayan Kimberly-Clark tissue and diaper factory in Askar and the Labour Ministry. The company is asking the government to declare the strike illegal, and refused a Ministry offer to mediate.

Bangladeshi workers in Kuwait demand back pay

The *Gulf News* reports that 1,200 Bangladeshi workers ravaged their country's embassy in Kuwait City April 24 to protest the non-payment of their salaries by a local cleaning company.

The workers arrived in 10 buses and stormed the building to demand wages which have gone unpaid for six months. Police arrested the workers, claiming they had assaulted embassy staff and broken windows, but quickly released all but a few.

The same day in Doha, 50 workers struck a landscaping company, demanding three months' unpaid wages and better conditions. The workers have been living off food discarded at a nearby market.

Kuwait's new labor law took effect in January, legalizing strikes and providing for fines against employers who violate workers' rights.

Wal-Mart workers strike

CHINA LABOUR BULLETIN

More than 10,000 workers at a Japanese-owned Wal-Mart supplier in Shenzhen, China, struck April 17, demanding the right to establish their own union. This is believed to be the first time Chinese workers have struck specifically in order to unionize.

Riot police sealed off the Uniden Electronics factory in Fuyong, April 20, to prevent the workers from marching out of the factory through town, and then strike leaders began disappearing – probably into secret jail cells. After eight days on strike, workers capitulated.

There have been a series of recent strikes at the factory against abusive managers, for sick pay and permanent contracts, better living conditions, and higher salaries. Management has violated a December 2004 agreement to raise wages (to the legal minimum) and permit workers to set up a union – instead firing several strike leaders, prompting the latest strike.

Chinese law requires companies to set up a branch of the official union federation in any workplace employing 25 or more workers. However, such laws are routinely violated, and even where unions are established workers are typically not allowed to elect their own officials.

Transport & General union lines up Liverpool scabs

Ten years ago, 500 Liverpool dock workers were locked out after honoring a picket line. They have been fighting to return to their jobs ever since; a struggle that saw longshoremen in many countries refuse to work ships loaded by Mersey Docks & Harbour Company scabs.

Now the Transport & General Workers Union has announced that it will represent the blacklegs who replaced them, agreeing to casual status and working conditions that the dockers had fought for generations to abolish. The International Dockworkers Council has called on the TGWU to instead support the workers who have never stopped demanding the right to return to their jobs.

Mexican teachers fight neoliberalism

BY PAUL BOCKING

Mexico is currently experiencing an upsurge of workers' resistance to the entrenchment of capitalist reforms. For this emerging movement, across industries and featuring a growing voice of a militant rank and file, a current flash point is the education sector.

The National Union of Education Workers (SNTE) held a series of demonstrations and travelling caravans across Mexico over the past month. On May 19, thousands of teachers marched into Mexico City's central square and established a large tent city outside the national palace. The SNTE is campaigning to raise wages and improve working conditions nationwide, while locals press for the release of imprisoned union activists in Chiapas and elsewhere.

The National Coordination of Education Workers (CNTE), is a parallel rank-and-file labour organization within the SNTE, struggling for greater independence for the SNTE from government intervention, as well as greater internal union democracy.

Beyond striving to improve wages and working conditions, the CNTE and the SNTE have a broader political, social and cultural perspective. They frame their struggle above all against the neoliberal onslaught currently wracking Mexico, which in the education sector takes the shape of decreased funding for public institutions and the threat of privatization. In addition, Mexican teachers are challenging the imposition of an education curriculum which promotes individualism over solidarity, a focus primarily on marks and grades, and subservience to authority – a system, they argue, designed to produce a compliant workforce under capitalism. In its place, these unionists call for an education system that is fully accessible from pre-school through university, promoting critical thinking and human, rather than market, values.

Teachers do not stand alone against the Mexican government's business-backed neoliberal agenda. Electricians and utility workers, members of the Mexican Electricians Union (SME), along with telephone workers amongst others, have been noteworthy in their public support, linking the neoliberal offensive in the education sector to government initiatives to privatize the major state-owned electrical utility, phone company and other major industries. Unionists point to previous cases of privatization, including Mexico's major gas company, PEMEX, and the national railway system, to demonstrate how union contracts were broken and labour standards were slashed. In the case of the railway, tens of thousands of jobs were lost outright.

The SME and sections of the SNTE aligned with the CNTE are a part of the Campesino-Labour-Indigenous Social and Popular Front (FSCISP), a nationwide movement challenging neoliberalism. The FSCISP was founded in November 2004 and is comprised of over 225 unions, indigenous, rural, student and other community groups, embracing a wide base of Mexican civil society. The CNTE and other groups are calling for a nationwide general strike against President Fox's social and economic policies.

The activities of Mexican teachers, along with other workers, provides important lessons in resistance for teachers and other workers in Canada, the United States and elsewhere in the "developed" world. These Mexican workers in struggle clearly situate themselves as part of a broader working class, with which they have shared interests. This sense of identification is backed up by real acts of solidarity between workers in different industries and sectors, in the form of jointly participating in marches, rallies, protests and public statements. These actions both present a stronger, united front against the same enemy, and simultaneously increase public awareness and support of their efforts.

Mexico has a history of state control of unions, reinforcing a pro-company leadership. Many unions are still under the sway of conservatives, but the example of the CNTE is remarkable for the potential of the rank and file in democratizing and radicalizing the labour movement. The establishment of a militant, broad-based social movement like the FSCISP is an inspiration for organizers in other nations struggling to build an autonomous popular movement against the policies of capitalism and the state.

Shop 'til you drop...

The United Electrical Workers (UE) has set up an interactive feature on its web site (at www.ueinternational.org/shop) that lets you see how much workers in a variety of jobs (teacher, factory worker, nurse, etc.) are paid, and what you can buy with those wages. The cost of groceries, appliances, cars and rent are shown not in dollars but in terms of how many hours a U.S. and a Mexican worker would have to work to buy them.

World Labor Solidarity

A COLUMN BY THE INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY COMMISSION

Death threats in Guatemala

The IWW's International Solidarity Commission has written Guatemalan authorities condemning death threats directed at José Armando Palacios and his family and calling on the government to ensure that he and other FESTRAS members are able to organize freely. FESTRAS represents coffee workers at INCASA. Armando Palacios is a former member of the union's executive committee. A group of armed men recently threatened his wife and 9-year-old daughter, threatening to kill them and demanding to be told where he was. INCASA responded by illegally firing Armando Palacios on May 6.

Bangladesh National Garment Workers Federation

The International Solidarity Commission has raised funds to assist victims of the April 10 factory collapse, which killed at least 76 workers, including 5 members of the NGWF, to our fellow workers in the National Garment Workers Federation.

Working with other unions in the industry, the Federation has organized relief for the victims, and a series of demonstrations against the unsafe conditions that plague the industry. On April 22, it organized nationwide protests. More than 500 workers carrying red and black flags rallied in the capital, Dhaka, and in the manufacturing cities of Chitagong, Savar, Narayangong and Gazipur.

The Federation also plans protests at the offices of the Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association, the Labour Ministry, and the chief inspector of factories. They are demanding the arrest of the factory owners, compensation for the victims, an official inquiry committee with full union participation, and joint safety inspections of all garment factories in Bangladesh.

Mexican garment workers

The ISC also endorsed a call for solidarity by the Coalition for Justice in the Maquiladoras protesting illegal firings of union organizers at a Mexican plant (Lajat) producing garments for Levi's and Mudd Jeans. Lajat management agreed to reinstatement with full back pay and other demands as picketing was set to begin at Mudd and Levi's offices in the U.S. Workers are continuing to press for an independent union.